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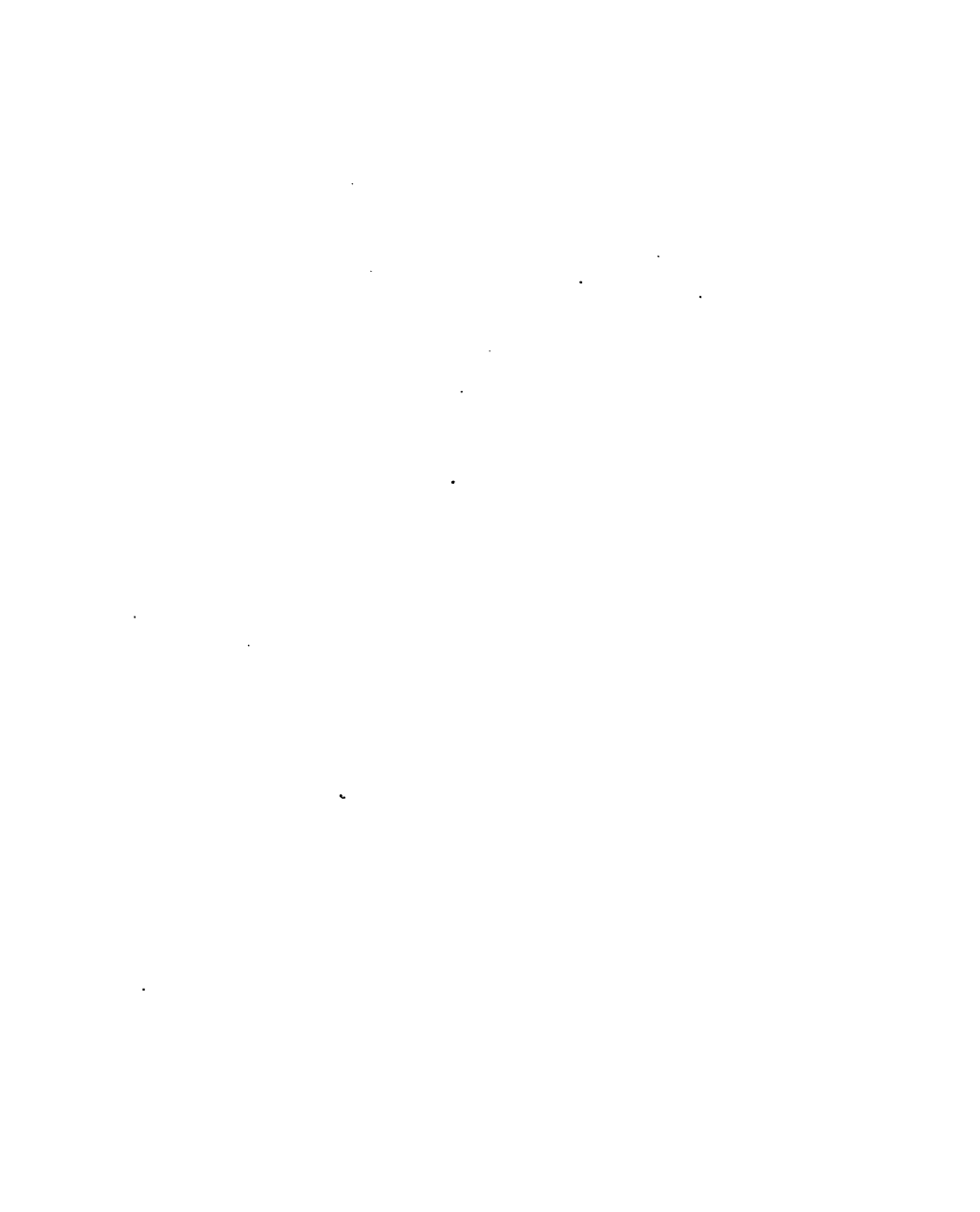
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**CHARACTER-SHAPING AND
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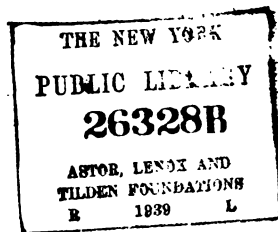
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H. CLAY TRUMBULL



PHILADELPHIA
JOHN D. WATTLES, PUBLISHER

1889

1889



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PREFACE.

Lessons from one man's experiences and observations will not be of value to all. But lessons from any man's experiences and observations will be of value to some. No man stands, in his feelings and sympathies, for his entire race. But every man, in his sympathies and feelings, stands for a class.


Hence it is, that whatever truths have made a profound impression on a man in the progress of his life-course are likely to make a correspondent impression on others who are like him, if he can bring those truths with any vividness before them. And when a series of related truths have excited interest in their detached separateness, they will hardly fail to excite fresh interest in their exhibited relation to one another and to a common central truth.

The essays in this volume are an outcome of their writer's observings and experienings in his varied life-course. They were received with interest as editorial contributions in the pages of *The Sunday School Times*, while appearing there, one by one, during a term of ten years or more; and their republication has been urged by many who desire them for preservation in a permanent form. They are now presented in a new light, in a logical order for the elucidation and emphasis of a truth which is common to them all.

The gaining of the thoughts of this volume has not been without cost to its writer. His hope is that the considering of them will not be without stimulus and profit to its readers.

H. C. T.

PHILADELPHIA,
August 14, 1889.



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L

WHAT IS CHARACTER?

Few terms are used more frequently and more vaguely in comments on life, and in counsels to the young, than the term "character." We are told that this person has a strong character, and that that person has a weak character; that one has a great deal of character, and another has no character; that one has a good character, and another a bad character. Young people are told that character is everything to them, that their character is sure of disclosure, sure to assert itself; and they are enjoined to maintain a high character, to strive for a noble character, to cultivate a character worthy of admiration, to show real character.

What is meant by "character" in all these statements and admonitions? What is character, as distinct from reputation, disposition,

peculiarities of taste, and habits of conduct? How many minds are clear on this point?

The term "character," like most descriptive terms in common use, has more than one meaning; and the interchanging and overlapping of these different meanings are the cause of much confusion in its uses and applications. Primarily, "character" is the scratch, or stamp, or sign, by which an engraver, or other worker, marks his work as his own. Its use goes back to the days when every brick manufactured on the plains of Shinar, or by the banks of the Nile, received its graven stamp designating the ruler by whose orders that brick was made.

The root of the word itself appears in all the Aryan languages, with the same meaning and uses, down to the present day. It is applied to the letters of the alphabet, which were first cut, or graven, or stamped, in the clay, or on tablets of wax, or metal, or stone. It is another name for the signature, or monogram, or personal superscription, or trade-mark, of the potter, the painter,

the sculptor, the writer, or any other artist or artisan, or inventor, as indicative of the personality of the maker, or of the distinctive individuality of the article marked. It is the visible token by which a thing is distinguished from every other thing with which it might otherwise be confounded.

As applied to a person, "character" primarily means personality or individuality; but in usage it means also a great deal more. We speak of the various "characters" introduced into a drama; by which we mean no more than the different individuals appearing there. Again we speak of the particular character of each one of those characters; by which we mean "the sum of qualities" which distinguishes one of those persons from any other one. With the "character" Hamlet, for example, every reader of Shakespeare is familiar. Over the character of Hamlet all the critics are in dispute interminably. One's character, which is everything to one's self, which is sure to disclose itself, and by which one will ultimately be estimated and

Eccentricity is not character. Being peculiar is not necessarily the exhibit of individuality. A man may be quite exceptional in his tastes and methods of conduct without having or disclosing real character. Dr. Johnson's character, for example, was not shown in his habit of nervously twirling and twisting his fingers, and of whimsically laying his hand on the top of every post which he passed in the street. Those were his eccentricities, his oddities. But his character ~~was~~ shown in his standing with bared head for hours out in the cold rain, at the old book-stall in Uttoxeter market, in self-imposed penance for his disobedience to his father long years before. He was man enough to remember and grieve over his early transgression, and to do his utmost to atone for his boyhood's neglect of duty.

Eccentricities are superficial. Peculiarities of taste and speech and manner are of the outer man. They do not come from, nor do they indicate, the inner nature. Character, on the contrary, is of the innermost

being. "Deeper than the judgment, deeper than the feelings, lies the seat of human character,—in that which is the mystery of all beings and all things, in what we call their 'nature,' without knowing where it lies, what it is, or how it wields its power." The best part of a true man's nature is never on the surface; the weakest and most unattractive portion often shows there.

"Errors, like straws, upon the surface flow;
He who would search for pearls must dive below."

Conduct is not character; although character in large measure controls and directs conduct. A man whose character, so far as he has a character, is bad, will frequently shape his outward conduct after the pattern of the upright; he will strive to appear and to do as if he had a good character. In the long run a man's conduct must conform to, and so will disclose, his character; but this does not by any means make character and conduct identical. Conduct is one of the means by which character is made known

to others; but many things are to be considered when judging a man's character from his actions.

Nor, again, is it true that reputation is character, although the two terms are often used interchangeably, as when we speak of a man's character for integrity, for veracity, for courage, or for generosity. "Character lies in or pertains to the person, and is the mark of what he is; reputation depends upon others, and is what they think of him. A man may have a fair reputation, though his character is not really good." The only sure basis of a permanently good reputation is a good character; but many a man's reputation is for a time better than his character—if that were known—would warrant; and sometimes a man has a poorer reputation than his true character deserves. A man's character is what a man furnishes as the foundation of his reputation, or of his fame. A man's reputation, or fame, is what he gets from the world in return for his exhibit of character.

II.

EXCEPTIONAL CHARACTER THE MEASURE OF THE MAN.

In the lower sense of common usage, a man's "character" is the sum of his qualities, whereby he is distinguished from other individuals. In the higher and more restricted sense, "character" is a pre-eminence of personality in the direction of one's better and nobler being. In either the one sense or the other, character is the measure of the man; for the sum of a man's qualities as an individual is the man's self; and the pre-eminence of a man's distinctive qualities marks the man's peculiar self. For all practical purposes, therefore, it is sufficient to say, that a man's *superiority* of personality in the direction of the right is the real measure of the man.

For example, a man who is six feet four

inches in stature, is a man of mark wherever he goes. He towers above his fellows. He can see beyond them. It is quite impossible for him to avoid pre-eminence in any company. In a sense, this is because that man is six feet four inches high. In another sense, it is because that man is eight inches higher than the average man. Until he passed five feet eight inches, he had no prominence, he was of no special note. Every inch above the average, was, however, a move in the direction of pre-eminence; and his notable measurement was from that mark, upward. As in physical stature, so in mental acquirements and capabilities. It is what a man can do over and above the average man in any sphere of endeavor, that is his real measure of attainment; that is his measure of power in that direction.

No one stops to ask whether a man lives and breathes, has the power of locomotion and speech, has a moral sense, and has the ordinary use and training of the common faculties of humanity, when that man is to be

passed upon as to his fitness for a special service of importance. All this is to be taken for granted, to begin with. The practical measuring is to be made from this pre-supposed starting-point; and the real question is, What special qualities has this man to fit him for this special place, apart from those qualities which are essential to his being counted among living and moving men in the mass?

As it is in the physical and mental spheres, so it is in the sphere of prevailing-personality; until a man passes the average standard, he cannot be a man of mark; he cannot be entitled to recognition for measurement as a man among men, or as a man apart from men. His practical measure is, therefore, the measurement of his superiority above the common reach of his fellows in nobler being and doing; and this is what is called "real character." This is as clearly true, as that the practical measure of a water-spout at sea is its rise above the common ocean-level, not its height above the lower bed of the sea.

He who is spoken of as a man of upright character, as a man of courageous character, as a man of decision of character, as a man of unselfish character, as a man of affectionate character, is by that very mention designated as a man of exceptional character in the direction indicated. The world gives no marked credit to a man for being or doing as well as the average. Until he passes that level, he has no award of special commendation from the community generally; even though he might be censured for a failure to attain to the average degree. Other nations than England expect every man to do his duty, and are unready to award him a medal, or a vote of thanks, unless he has shown some pre-eminence in that line of achievement. Hence it is, that a man's measure of character, his measure of power and worth, may be said to be coincident with the measure of his difference, in the right direction, from the average standard of being and doing in his sphere.

It is not that a mere difference from the

average standard of purpose and action either constitutes or indicates character; but it is that character in its truest sense involves a difference from that standard. A difference may result from falling below the average, or from an eccentricity at the level of the average; in such a case, it is no proof of real character, but rather an indication of the lack of character. Character shows itself in a difference which comes from an outgoing or an uprising beyond the best standard of the average, in the direction of the truer, the purer, or the nobler, in the realm of duty or of affection.

The Swiss soldiers who followed Arnold de Winckelreid, in his memorable onset at Sempach, were fully up to the average standard of soldierly courage. It was his thinking and daring to move forward alone for the making of a way through the impregnable line of the enemy, by gathering a death-harvest of lances into his own great heart, that marked him as the man of heroic character there; and his eminence in the record of that

in good taste, deviating from the fashion. So, all the way up in the scale of thought and action: the common wish is, to do as others do; to be as others are; to speak and act in accordance with conventional—generally agreed upon—standards. Character cannot be shown in such conformity; it does not become character in its best sense until it rises above the average, and so departs from the conventional; then it is characteristic and distinguished.

The world recognizes the lower and undistinguished level of the average standard in manners and morals, when it speaks of "common honesty," "common fairness," "common decency," and the like. The man who falls short of the common level is looked down upon with contempt. Only he who rises above that level is looked up to. One could not be seen by those who looked up for him, unless he were higher than their level, higher than the average standard in his sphere. He who has no more than common honesty, common fairness, common decency, is not

entitled to a character for honesty, fairness, or decency. The measurement of real character begins where the common standard ends. It is this truth, which prompts Sir Thomas Browne to counsel his friend: "Sit not down in the popular seats and common level of virtues, but endeavor to make them heroical." Unless a man is willing to be unlike others in being and in doing, he cannot be distinguished for either his being or his doing.

The Bible emphasizes repeatedly this truth, that a man must not conform his ways to the common standard, if he would have and show character. Moses said, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil." Paul went farther, and suggested that it is not right to let the multitude settle the question of what is evil. "Let each man be fully assured *in his own mind*," on points of personal duty; let him have and show character in deciding for himself in all such matters. And in its record of individual lives, the Bible continually uplifts an exceptional independence of character as the measure of heroism.

It is because Caleb and Joshua would not conform their opinions to those of their associates, that they stand out as men of character. It is because Rahab and Ruth would not let the choice of their people be their choice, that they are given so honorable a place in sacred story. It is the refusal of the four Hebrew youths in Babylon to eat and drink just as all about them ate and drank, which marks their nobleness as characteristic and distinguished.

And how tenderly and lovingly the sacred chronicler refers, again and again, to those three heroes of the brave band of David, whose exceptional largeness of devoted affection prompted them to rise up and break through the host of the Philistines; not in the heat of sudden conflict, but in a deliberate and overpowering purpose of bringing to their thirsty leader a refreshing draught of pure cold water, from the old home spring by the gate of Bethlehem. In all the subsequent record of the brave deeds of one or another of the other mighty men of David,




the touching memorial of *these* great hearts of love is added: "Howbeit, he attained not to the three." Others had courage, others had devotedness; but these three had a *character* for courageous and affectionate devotion: hence they stand forever and pre-eminently distinguished among the followers of David, heroes in a heroic host.

In order to be the possessor of exceptional character, it is not necessary for one to be conscious of its possessing. To be one's self fearlessly, does not involve the knowledge or the feeling that one is unlike everybody else. Far less does it involve a show of consciousness in that possession. As a rule, the man of marked superiority in character is not inclined to claim pre-eminence.

Steele, in *The Spectator*, emphasizes this truth, by saying: "I take it to be the highest instance of a noble mind, to bear great qualities without discovering in a man's behavior any consciousness that he is superior to the rest of the world. Or, to say it otherwise, it is the duty of a great person so to demean

himself as that, whatever endowments he may have, he may appear to value himself upon no qualities but such as any man may arrive at." In fact, to one who is himself, and who desires to be himself, it seems so natural to be just this and nothing different, that he is inclined to count his way of being and doing the way which would instinctively commend itself to everybody else, as well as to himself.

As Carlyle reminds us, "The healthy know not of their health, but only the sick. . . . If, in any sphere of man's life, then in the moral sphere, as the inmost and most vital of all, it is good that there be wholeness; that there be unconsciousness, which is the evidence of this." The hero is heroic without thinking of it. The man of integrity does right instinctively. "How could I do otherwise?" is his response to any word of praise for his well-doing. "Wouldn't everybody feel and do just as I do?" says the person of real character, concerning his or her peculiar course of fearless uprightness.



"Who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life?" said grand Nehemiah, when counseled to seek the sanctuary for his own protection; "I will not go in."

By experience of their contrast with others some come to realize their possession of exceptional character. And others again have characters of rare power which have never yet been called into action, and so into prominence. Those who are skilled in character reading may discern the pre-eminence of these persons, or some peculiar emergency may bring their superiority to general notice. But, in some instances, their remarkable strength of character fails of being known to the world, "just because," as Bushnell suggests, "the storm they were made for has not begun to blow." Character may be ready to assert itself, but wait long for its opportunity.

True manhood or true womanhood in a very high degree may, in fact, exist in a person who little thinks of his or her superi-

ority in its possession; and who is as yet unrecognized by the world as its remarkable possessor. Such a person needs only an occasion, to be known and admired of all. The rare treasure is there, even though the mine has never been opened to sight.

Confucius, who, from the breadth of his view and the practical nature of his teachings, might be called the Bacon of Chinese philosophy, designates, in all of his writings, the man of character as "the superior man," in contrast with "the mean man," or the average man. When asked, by one of his pupils, "what constituted the superior man," Confucius answered: "He acts before he speaks, and afterwards speaks according to his actions;" or, in other words, the man of superior character does the right thing instinctively and naturally. Yet this way, so natural to him, is an utterly exceptional way. "Thus it is," says Confucius, "that were the superior man to speak of his way in all its greatness, nothing in the world would be found able to embrace it; and were he to speak of its

minuteness, nothing in the world would be found able to split it."

Most persons desire to be recognized as persons of real character. It is important, therefore, for all to understand that real character cannot be shown by conformity to the common standards of right, or of expediency, in one's sphere. To show character, one must consent to be distinguished from others generally. To be distinguished, one must decide for himself what to wear, what to eat or drink, how to bear himself among and before others, what to believe, what to refuse to use, what to refuse to do, and what to refuse to believe. Not eccentricity or mere singularity, but personality,—God-reliant, hell-defiant, and man-resistant personality,—is the basis of true character. It is being one's self, as in the sight of God, and as responsible directly to God, that shows character, and that secures the recognition of character.

"To his own master he standeth or falleth," says Paul. To your own Master—and one

only is your Master—you must stand or fall. Emerson but paraphrases and applies this apostolic truth when he says: "That which each can do best, none but his Maker can teach him. . . . Do that which is assigned you, and you cannot hope too much, or dare too much." And quaint old Henry Vaughan presses it home in another way, when he says to each of us severally:

"Seek not the same steps with the crowd; stick
thou

To thy sure trot; a constant, humble mind
Is both his own joy, and his Maker's too;
Let folly dust it on, or lag behind.
A sweet privacy in a right soul
Outruns the earth, and lines the utmost pole."

III.

THE COMPOSITION OF OUR CHARACTERS.

Our characters are ourselves. Yet none of us, Minerva-like, sprang into being full-formed and full-armed for our work in life. Individually we are growths rather than creations—growths from divinely created germs, but nevertheless growths. In the process of our growing, various elements have entered into our being, and various influences have combined to form and shape our characters.

Every person is himself from the beginning. At birth and by inheritance he has germs of character which are his own peculiarly. Tendencies, tastes, possibilities, are his, which are not another's. Training and opportunities can do for him what they could not do for the great mass of mankind; and on the other hand, the lack of just the

training and just the opportunities which might do so much for him would be far more unfortunate in his case than in the case of one of any other nature. His limitations and his possibilities are all within the range of his germinal nature; but that range is a very wide one.

A man can never really be any one but himself; but he may be fully developed, well rounded, symmetrical, graceful, appearing at and doing his best, or he may be dwarfed, irregular, repressed, awkward, showing and being at his worst. What he might be, by the grace of God, depends upon his native characteristics. What he is, depends on his varied circumstances, associations, companionships, experiences. The influences which go to make up his character as finally manifested to the world are many and varied—more numerous and diverse than perhaps we have been accustomed to suppose.

There are some things which we see at a glance to be influential in shaping and directing our characters. The example and in-

structions of our parents and teachers; the circumstances of ease or hardship in which we are brought up, the natural surroundings of our childhood's home—in city, or country, or at the sea-shore; the occupations and the companionships of our earlier years; the intellectual, social, and religious privileges which are ours during that period of our lives; these and a host of other things like them we are always ready to take into account as developing and training agencies, in the bringing us to be what we are.

Beyond all this, we are compelled to admit, that a single emergency or catastrophe sometimes changes a life for its entire history, the events of an hour doing more to shape and develop the chief characteristics of a nature than all the former experiences of that life. The blow that leaves a child fatherless or motherless, or that takes away husband or wife from one whose career until now has been that of scarcely undisturbed love and joy, does more than bring bitterness of sorrow and a sense of desolateness of soul to

the bereaved one. It calls into play new powers of effort and endurance, and summons hitherto unused and perhaps unsuspected energies, to meet responsibilities which did not exist before. It seems, in fact, to make a new character, through changing the proportions of the elements of character.

The same is true, in a sense, of a sudden change in one's circumstances, such as brings poverty in the place of affluence, blindness or the dependent state of a cripple instead of bodily perfectness, or which summons one to new and enlarged responsibilities—as of a military command in time of war, or of exalted political station, or of the care and use of great wealth received by marriage or inheritance. A character has, indeed, apparently been transformed by a night of horror on a burning steamer, by the shock of a plunging train through an open draw-bridge, by a terrible experience of calumny or unjust suspicion, or the treacherous failure of a friend, or by peculiar fear and anxiety in behalf of those who are loved dearer than life.

All these things enter into the composition of character; yet they are not the only—perhaps not the most potent—agencies in giving shape and play to the distinctive characteristics of one's nature.

The important elements of character-making—or character-shaping—which we are most likely to overlook or undervalue are the exceptional impressions made upon us by casual acquaintances in our earlier life, and the quieter influences exerted over us by those with whom we are closely associated in after years—when our characters are commonly supposed to be fully and finally established. If we could trace back to their first exhibit some of the characteristics which now mark us most distinctively, we should perhaps find that we owe their development, not to the steady training in their direction received by us at home or in school, but to the sudden disclosure of their attractiveness in the life of some one whom we were with but for a brief season; or, again, we should see that the temptations which try us most

severely, and the evil thoughts and imaginings which have given us greatest trouble in life, are the outgrowth of germs planted in our minds by persons of whom we have no distinct recollections apart from the harm they thus did us.

It may have been an exceptionally confident assurance of unwavering faith given expression to by a saintly grandmother on her occasional visit at our childhood's home, that first made vividly real to us the explicit promises of revelation, and led us to rest thenceforward on every word of God as sure and unfailing in spite of all seeming obstacles to its performance. Or it may have been a single hissing sneer of a Saturday afternoon playmate, in reflection on the purity and unselfishness of a person whom we had looked up to with admiration and reverence, which put the poison of suspicion and doubt, concerning even the noblest and the best, into our mind, to work its pernicious influence for all time to come.

It may have been one sturdy sentence of


inspired resolve, spoken by a man of intensest energy, and of absolutely unflinching will, at a time when any ordinary person would have deemed all human effort hopeless, which made us realize once for all the truth of his declaration that "only Omnipotence can stand in the way of a man of determined purpose." Or it may have been one hour's instruction in sin by a chance visitor, almost under our watchful mother's eye, that in its consequences was little less to us than the partaking of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was to our first parents in Eden.

A whole family of little folks have been influenced to characteristic courtesy of word and manner, and of thoughtful attention to the interests of others in lesser things and in greater, by the coming among them, for only a very short stay, of "a gentleman of the old school" whose peculiar politeness of bearing and phrase uniformly toward all, and always, was as pleasing as it was notable. A young girl of choice instincts and of fine natural

taste has caught an impulse in the direction of the adornment and care of her room, and of neatness and refinement in all things, by a single night with a companion of high culture and of lovely spirit—an impulse which has carried her forward in both taste and spirit far beyond her unconscious tutor.

Another girl poorly favored at home by good examples for her imitation has recognized in a new acquaintance at a place of summer resort an ideal standard of noble womanhood toward which she has aspired from that hour onward. It is often the one lesson of good or evil in early years which prompts to the upward struggle for a lifetime, or necessitates unceasing contest with temptation—with perhaps a yielding to it again and again—in the following years.

Nor is it in childhood only that our characters are shaped and directed by our associates. The best characters are always open to improvement, and always in danger of deteriorating. Many a husband seems actually made over by his wife; and many a wife



seems absolutely another person through her husband's influence, after a few years of married life. It is perhaps a friend of our maturer years whose purity and nobleness, whose gentleness and grace, whose spirit of fairness and charity, or whose well-defined views on every point of ethics where he has a conviction, impress us with the correctness and beauty of his ideal, gradually influence us to his ways of thinking, and inspire us to strive toward his standards of judgment and feeling.

Or again, our moral tone is lowered and our tastes are vitiated by intimate companionship, in social life or in business, with one of grosser nature, or of perverted and debased tendencies. Characteristics which had been long repressed in our nature come into new prominence, and those which had before distinguished us drop out of sight. So long as we live, our characters are in the formative state; and whether we be counted strong or weak, our characteristics are continually being re-shaped and re-directed by those whom we newly come to know and admire, or with

whom we are newly brought into intimate association. A fresh ideal held before us, a purer, nobler, lovelier character coming distinctly into our range of observation and study, is something to thank God for; for it may be an inspiration to us, and a help toward the better and higher development of our characters than we have before realized.

Meanwhile, we are ourselves the shapers and directors of the characters and the characteristics of some whom we meet or reach. This thought ought to give us a sense of added responsibility and of added anxiety. What we *are* may settle the question of what a multitude of others shall be and shall do. Our lives and characters are entering into and becoming a part of the lives and characters of those whom we never knew until recently, and their lives and characters are entering into and becoming a part of ours. The composition of their and our characters is still in progress.

IV.

THE UNIFYING FACTOR IN CHARACTER.

There is nothing more beautiful or more highly prized, in the world of inorganic matter, than the crystal. And the crystal owes its peculiar form and quality to a single unifying factor by which unattractive and valueless simples were brought into new and enduring relations with one another, and were given a structure and an appearance which otherwise they could never have possessed. It may have been by the addition of one more element to the compound, that a heterogeneous mixture was resolved into crystalline symmetry and solidity. It may have been by the unifying factor of heat or of cold, of wetness or of dryness, that molecules of carbon, or silica, or alumina, came into that affinity which transformed a dull

earthy element into a gem for a royal crown. By one process or by another it was the unifying factor that gave all the other factors, in that thing of durability and of admirableness, their substantial value. And it is the unifying factor which is the one thing needful to completeness and to practical efficiency in every combination of forces in the world of matter, of mind, and of morals.

Many a man who obviously has fine mental qualities, and who is possessed of knowledge in various branches of learning, shows himself unable to use his intellectual powers and attainments to any practical advantage, simply because of his lack of the one element of mental potency which would bring all the other elements of his mind into their proper relations, one to another and each to all. We are accustomed to say of such a man, "He has all kinds of sense but common sense;" which is only another way of saying that his mind is without the unifying factor which is needed to secure the crystallization of his powers into the form where they

would be at their best, and would show themselves most attractively. Wisdom has, indeed, been called that talent which enables a man to use all his other talents; or, in other words, wisdom is the unifying factor in the world of intellect.

In personal character the unifying factor is always the chief factor. We speak of the necessity of a man's having a purpose in life, if he would be at his best, and would make the most of himself; and saying this, we recognize in the factor of a life purpose the unifying factor in the elements of personal character. A man may have a fine physique, a well-balanced and a well-stored mind, a high moral tone, and a choice social position; but, unless he consciously has something to live for, all his advantages, natural and acquired, fail of arousing his entire abilities, and of putting them into their fullest play. Let him, however, be once possessed of, or by, an absorbing purpose in life, and his faculties are unified and energized, so that he is ready to be at, and to do, his best.

Thus it was that the emergency of our Civil War supplied the unifying factor in the personal character of many a young man, North and South; so that he who had seemed to be wasting his time in aimless living became quickly a very hero in name and in deed. And when a great life-purpose comes into the personal character as a unifying factor, he who lacks the advantages of many another in his personal presence, in his mental acquirements, and in his social position, may transcend them all—if they are without such a unifying factor. It may be patriotism, it may be an aroused filial affection, it may be a new sense of love or of friendship, it may be an added interest in some line of special study, it may be a desire for success in business, that proves the unifying factor in the character of an individual; but whatever it is, its presence and potency are sure to be felt and to be seen prevailing.

In man as man, the one unifying factor, without which man can never be at his best or do his best, is the faith factor. That which

distinguishes man from all the lower orders of creation is the ability to recognize the unseen and the infinite, and to rest on the felt presence of Him who is all and in all, of the universe of his creating and controlling. In the lack of a personal faith in God as *his* God, no man can be what he ought to be, or do what he ought to do. Without this faith, a man cannot work or study in assured confidence of results; nor can he see the past, the present, or the future, in the light in which alone all its facts and teachings are intelligible and consistent. With this faith, a man can stand, as it were, at the very centre of the universe, and look out over the vast sweep of God's providences, in simple confidence that all things are working together for his good; since his Father orders them all, and he is in loving union with God through his union by faith with Him who is one with the Father.

Without faith, a man's powers are as the earthy elements in their primitive separate-

ness; it is by faith as a unifying factor that those elements are crystallized in symmetry and in durability.

"Without thy presence, wealth are bags of cares;
Wisdom, but folly; joy, disquiet, sadness:
Friendship is treason, and delights are snares;
Pleasure's but pain, and mirth but pleasing madness.

Without thee, Lord, things be not what they be,
Nor have their being, when compared with thee.

"In having all things, and not thee, what have I?
Not having thee, what have my labors got?
Let me enjoy but thee, what farther crave I?
And having thee alone, what have I not?

I wish nor sea, nor land; nor would I be
Possessed of heaven, heaven unpossessed of thee."

"One thing thou lackest yet," said Jesus to a young man who had wealth and station and capacity and knowledge, and a loving and a lovable spirit. The one thing there lacking was the unifying factor which alone could bring all the other factors of that young man's personality into their right

relations to one another, and to the forces at work in the universe of God. Without that unifying factor the favored young man was at a disadvantage, in spite of all his advantages. And no advantages can compensate any man, young or old, for the lack of the unifying factor which shall enable him to recognize and to occupy his place in the Divine plan, and to use all his faculties and attainments in their proper order and measure.

We have need to beware lest, with all our advantages and attainments, we lack the unifying factor which shall give the highest effectiveness to our powers in their best exercise. It is not the number of our faculties, nor the variety of our acquirements, but rather our ability to use them severally and collectively as they should be used, that is the measure of our capacity in our sphere of being and doing. Without the unifying factor, all other factors will be incomplete and insufficient, in our case, as in the case of all others.

Nor need the unifying factor ever be lacking to us. God, who gives us all that we have of good, will not withhold that which is essential to our best use of all which we have from him. It is only when we culpably bury one talent of the two or of the five talents which God has entrusted to us, thinking that we are doing measurably well by our use of the remainder, that we need fear to suffer from the lack of the unifying talent which can make the other talents as productive as they ought to be. The unifying talent is one of the talents, the use of which God proffers to every one of us. We can bury it, or we can improve it—and take the consequences accordingly.

V.

THE MORAL BASIS OF PRACTICAL EFFICIENCY.

Everybody recognizes the value of morality—in the sphere of morals; but not everybody recognizes the surpassing value of morality in the varied spheres of practical efficiency in every-day life. Yet the moral basis is as truly a source of power in the laborer who pounds paving-stones in the street, as in the minister who expounds gospel truth in the pulpit.

No one gives hearty credence to a preacher of morals who is himself known as immoral. No one feels that such a man is fit to be a preacher. Indeed, there is hardly any suggestion of St. Paul more widely accepted by men of the world, as peculiarly appropriate to the instructor of morals, than St. Paul's pungent questions: "Thou that preachest a man should

not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery?" Nor does any one want a man in any line of practical performance, who lacks morality at the pivotal point of his personal duty just there. A band of robbers would want an honest treasurer. And a conclave of assassins would want to be sure of the unimpeachable fidelity of every accomplice. So all the way up and down the ranks of busy life. The *results* of morality at one point or another are deemed indispensable in every instance. But the common error is in supposing that a moral basis is not requisite for practical efficiency in any and every sphere of duty.

In personal combat,—which in olden time was counted an appeal to God for a decision between the contestants,—this truth, that the moral status of the man has most to do with his power, even in a struggle where brute force might seem the chiefest element of strength, has always been recognized by keen-eyed observers of the progress of the

ages. Shakespeare makes King Henry say:

"What stronger breastplate than a heart untainted!
Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just;
And he but naked, though locked up in steel,
Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted."


And Tennyson's Sir Galahad, with his high personal purpose, in quest of the Holy Grail, cries out:

"My good blade carves the casques of men,
My tough lance thrusteth sure;
My strength is as the strength of ten,
Because my heart is pure."

In his arraignment of Warren Hastings, Edmund Burke said: "I never knew a man who was bad fit for *service* that was good. There is always some disqualifying ingredient, mixing and spoiling the compound. The man seems paralytic on that side, his muscles there have lost their very tone and character—they cannot move. In short, the accomplishment of anything good is a physical impossibility for such a man." And this is only another way of saying, what Solomon

said, in his wisest mood, of the average man for his day and for all days: "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he;" as he is in his inner self, in his moral nature, so he will be in his outer self, in his practical exhibit of self—in conduct. Again, it is what a greater than Solomon said: "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth that which is evil."

A moral purpose, a controlling moral conviction, gives added force to the words and to the actions of any man in any sphere. It is not that he can have no power without it. It is not that he can never appear to an advantage with its lack. But it is, that its possession gives an increased potency to his best work, and to his poorer; and that it secures a trustworthiness and a uniformity to his endeavors, not otherwise attainable. You feel the moral purpose of a writer, or a speaker, in behalf of any cause, anywhere. It thrills in his writings, it sounds in his



spoken appeals. You cannot have an abiding confidence in a lawyer or a physician whose morals you distrust. Unless you can believe in him as a man, you cannot unfailingly believe the words of his counsel. And who wants an assistant, or a servant, who cannot be left without watching?

It is not even possible for a man to act always on the conviction that "honesty is the best policy," unless there is a moral basis to his conviction. There are many times when honesty does not seem to be politic; when, indeed, the right course seems to be the more dangerous course; and *then* it requires faith in order to believe in the policy, in the prudence, in the safety, of doing just right—and taking the risks. A moral basis is essential to constancy in keeping up a fair show before the world; for the temptation is, sooner or later, very strong, to defy even appearances in the hope of a proffered gain. Unless, therefore, the man is sound inside, his unsoundness is in constant danger of working out to the surface.

It is the *basis*, not the superstructure, of practical efficiency, that is found in the moral status of the man. It is because the man is an honest man at heart, that he is sure to be a trustworthy treasurer; not that he does well because he consents to be honest while acting as a treasurer. It is because the man lives for a high purpose, that he will show his superior character in every act and relation of life; not, that he sees an advantage in well-doing where he is for the time being, and therefore adheres to the precepts of morality in that sphere. It is not the slavish obedience to the letter of the law, in the immediate realm of his service; but it is that love of right which is the fulfilling of the law, which gives a man practical effectiveness, wherever he is, in proportion to his moral purpose of life.

A moral purpose in life shows itself in a higher standard of morals all the way through. The lack of a moral purpose is indicated in little things and in larger. And the lack of a moral purpose, however indicated, points

to a corresponding lack of practical efficiency. The young man who goes to balls, to the theater, or to the whist club, who drinks wine or beer, or who smokes cigarettes, is not worth so much, hour by hour, or day by day, to his employer, for the posting of accounts, for the selling of goods, for the setting of types, for the handling of a surveyor's chain, or for any other work in city, or in country, or on the sea, as if he had a higher moral standard, and conformed to it by denying himself an indulgence in these questionable performances. And wise employers are recognizing this fact on every side. Many a young man fails of employment, or of promotion, when he seems otherwise well fitted for usefulness, simply because his conduct in such matters shows him to be lacking in that high moral purpose which is the surest basis of all practical efficiency in life.

It would be well if more young men realized that in fitting themselves for the business of life—fitting themselves, in college, in the counting-room, in the factory, or on the farm,

—they have chief need to secure a moral basis of conduct, and that that basis of conduct can be secured only in character. Character indicates itself in little things; but it tells in all things.

VI.

PERSONAL CHARACTER IN THE WORLD'S HISTORY.

The history of the world is the history of the words and the works and the influence of individuals of exceptional personal character. Exceptional personal character is, in fact, chiefest among the manifest forces in the world's progress.

God, as the source of all power, works in this world through the agency of one man at a time. "He putteth down *one*, and setteth up *another*." He does not put down one, and set up a great many others in that one's place; but he puts down one, and sets up another one. And the relative measure of the one put down and of the one set up is a measure of character; for character is always the measure of a man's power and of a man's possibilities in God's service.

God has given to the world, in the Bible, a record of his dealings with the world from its beginning; and that record is, in a sense, little more than the record of one man of marked character after another, in his relations to God and to his fellow-men. For a while, the whole world pivots on the character of the first man Adam; then, again, on the character of courageous Noah; then, on the character of the faith-filled Abraham; then, on the character of the godly Moses; and so on, through the record of Joshua, of Gideon, of Samson, of Samuel, of David, of Elijah, of Daniel, of Nehemiah. Yet later, in the New Testament record, apart from the story of the One of matchless character, it is the character of John the Baptist, of Peter the apostle, of John the evangelist, of Paul the missionary, which shapes the destiny of the nations for then and for thenceforward.

In outside history, it is much the same. The individual character of Menes, of Amenemhat I., of Thotmes III., of Rameses II., impresses the life and decides the course of

Egypt, and of the world beyond it, for a series of centuries. In the far East, it is the character of Kedor-la-'omer, of Sargon, of Assur-bani-pal, of Nebuchadnezzar, that decides the bounds, and settles the fate, of empires, for successive generations. Alexander is reared in the home of Philip of Macedon. As soon as his character has time to develop and to assert itself, the whole face of the world is changed thereby, never again to find its old form or to lose entirely the impress of that young man's character. And so on, in the storied character of Cæsar, of Alfred, of Charlemagne, of Peter the Great, of Saladin, of Cromwell, of Napoleon, of Washington. The one man of exceptional character is the force of forces in the world's movements of his period.

In the field of thought and feeling, it is the same as in the field of action. The character of Zoroaster, of Confucius, of Gautama, of Socrates, of Plato, of Aristotle, of Muhammad, of Descartes, of Bacon, swayed successively the minds and hearts of countless multi-

tudes. The personality of Homer, of Virgil, of Shakespeare, of Bunyan, still trembles in the hearts of myriads.

Practically all Christian men are ranged to-day, as religious thinkers and workers, as, in a sense, the followers of one man or of another man, and as the evidences and manifestations of that man's exceptional character. They even call themselves Lutherans, or Calvinists, or Arminians, or Wesleyans, or Mennonites, or Socinians, or Swedenborgians. Or, if they do not admit that they are displaying the peculiar power of some one man who started them in their present course, all intelligent students of history know that they were thus started by one man. It was Hildebrand who grasped the power of the papacy. It was Loyola who created Jesuitism. It was Henry the Eighth who made the English Church a new reality; and so all along the religious front.

Even in the freer countries and under the more popular governments of modern times, the exceptional personal character of one man

at a time is likely to sway the power of the nation, and he to be recognized as its more than ruler. It is not commonly the immediate head, but it is the man who is more of a man—a man of more marked and exceptional character—than he who is nominally at the head of affairs, who is spoken of as the leader of the national life for the time being.

For example, in considering the history of England, for the past century or more, we think and speak of the times of Walpole, of Pitt, of North, of Peel, of Palmerston, of Disraeli, and of Gladstone, rather than of the reigning sovereigns successively. And America has been divided in opinion from the foundation of its government by the views of Jefferson and Hamilton; and this not so much because of the nature of those opinions, or the official station of the men holding them, as through the intense personality of those two men of character as leaders in their generation. Calhounism and Garrisonism are spoken of as the extreme views of the two sides in the final great con-

flict of the opposing sections of the country. And these are only illustrations of the sweep of affairs in every sphere.

"Every true man," says Emerson, "is a cause, a country, and an age; requires infinite spaces and numbers and time fully to accomplish his design;—and posterity seem to follow his steps as a train of clients. A man Cæsar is born, and for ages after we have a Roman Empire. . . . And all history resolves itself very easily into the biography of a few stout and earnest persons." Froude, speaking of the aroused and consecrated man of character, who is fairly devoted to the right, says: "In such a condition, a man becomes magnetic. There are epidemics of nobleness, as well as epidemics of disease; and he infects others with his own enthusiasm. . . . One takes courage from another; one supports another; communities form themselves [after the type of such a man] with higher principles of action, and purer intellectual beliefs." And Browning summarizes all the lessons of history on this point, in his pregnant words:

"'Tis in the advance of individual minds
That the slow crowd should ground their ex-
pectation,
Eventually to follow ;—as the sea
Waits ages in its bed, till some one wave
Of all the multitudinous mass extends
The empire of the whole, some feet, perhaps,
Over the strip of sand, which could confine
Its fellows so long time ; thenceforth the rest,
E'en the meanest, hurry in at once,
And so much is clear gained."

Nor is it only with the man of exalted station, or with the man of intellectual genius, that character is a force of widely pervasive power. Any man of exceptional character anywhere is a man among men, is a man above men, is a man of force in his sphere ; and every man's sphere is, in a sense, the sphere of the universe. Mr. Moody has said, that "the world has yet to see the power of one man wholly consecrated to Christ ;" of one character fully devoted to its highest possibilities. But the world has had many a gleam of the truth in this direction. That humble monk of the desert, who, wellnigh fifteen

centuries ago, put an end to the brutal, blood-thirsty combats in the Roman Colosseum, by the simple assertion of his own pre-eminent personality, against the power of combatants, of spectators, and of imperial court and majesty, was such a gleam of the truth. No one knew him until then. His very name is still in question. Some call him Telemachus, and some Alymachus.

He was a rude, bare-footed, pilgrim-monk, from distant Asia. Aroused by the crime of those murderous games at Rome, he set himself to stay them. Unaided and alone, he swung himself into the vast arena, when the passions of the mighty throng were at their height, and called on those who were locked in the death-struggle to be at peace. Protesting in the name of God against such barbaric sports, he was quickly cut down, and trampled to death, at the cry of the infuriated populace. But his heroic exhibit of pre-eminent character was not in vain. His action closed the Colosseum as the theater of *gladiatorial* conflicts; and so once more was

exceptional personal character proved to be a potent force in the world.

Another gleam of this truth was in the character of Peter the hermit; a bare-footed, bare-headed, poor old man, with coarse garment and a girdle of rope, striding an ass, and moving up and down Europe, to stir kings and nobles and the common people to espouse the cause of the Crusades, for which he pleaded. His exceptional personal character was one of the world's forces in his day.

To come down nearer to our own time for an illustration of the truth that sheer personal character is a mighty force in the world, apart from the occupancy of exalted station, or the possession of great genius, there was Granville Sharp and his life-work. Successively an apprentice to a linen-draper, a law student, and a clerk in the Government Ordnance Office, he owed nothing to his position, but everything to his exceptional character,—in determination, in studiousness, and in persistency. Being told, in a discussion concerning the New Testament, that his ignorance of

Greek made him incompetent to judge the force of the arguments for and against the divinity of Jesus, he at once set himself to master that language; and his work on the Greek Article (which "led to the more elaborate treatises of Middleton and Wordsworth") became a new starting-point in New Testament exegesis.

The case of a negro, claimed as a slave in the streets of London, aroused the sympathy and enlisted the character of Granville Sharp. With all the courts in the realm against him, he started out to secure a decision that no man could be a slave on British soil. Fighting his case up to the highest tribunal, in spite of all odds, and with no seeming advantages, he overturned all former judicial decisions, wrested from the eminent Lord Chief-Justice Mansfield an admission of previous error, and secured the promulgation of the decision he had sought,—that no person could be held as a slave on the soil of Great Britain. Nor did he stop there. His *endeavors led to the work, in the same direc-*

tion, of Clarkson and Wilberforce and Buxton and Brougham; and that work went on until slavery was swept from the British possessions, and afterwards from America. And now every freedman or descendant of a slave, in our own land as in our mother-country, owes his liberty, instrumentally, to the character of Granville Sharp.

And ever among the great men of exceptional personal character have stood the great women of exceptional personal character, equally potent in their day and sphere. So it was with Hatasoo, Deborah, the Queen of Sheba, Jezebel, Cleopatra, Zenobia, Joan of Arc, Queen Elizabeth, Madame de Staël, Mary Somerville, Elizabeth Fry, Mary Lyon, Margaret Fuller, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Florence Nightingale, Dorothea Dix, Clara Barton, and many another woman in many another realm and sphere. Each of these was in her time, and thenceforward, a power for good or for ill in the world's forces.

It was a woman of character—however that character may have failed of its highest di-

rection—whose song of longing for herself,
as for every true woman of character, was:

“Oh, may I join the choir invisible
Of those immortal dead who live again
In minds made better by their presence: live
In pulses stirred to generosity;
In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn
For miserable aims that end with self;
In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like
stars,
And with their mild persistence urge man's
search
To vaster issues.

So to live is heaven:
To make undying music in the world,
Breathing as beauteous order that controls
With growing sway the growing life of man.”

As it has been, so it is, and so it must be.
“For none of us liveth to himself, and none
dieth to himself.”

“No life
Can be pure in its purpose, and strong in its strife,
And all life not be purer and stronger thereby.”

VII.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN KNOW- ING THE PERSON AND KNOW- ING THE CHARACTER.

Every person has a character; but not every person's character, as a character, is known to all who know the person as a person. To know the person as a person is one thing; it is a very simple thing. To know the character as a character is quite another thing; it is, in a sense, as simple a thing as the knowing of a person as a person, but it involves a great deal more than that in its scope and in its consequences; and it is a great deal rarer as a measure of knowledge concerning men.

The character as a character is what a man stands for in the sight of Omniscience; it is what will be disclosed in the day of universal disclosure, when the man will be known by

all as he has been and as he is. The person as a person is what the man appears to be, in his ordinary exhibit of his characteristics before his fellows. The "person" is, in its etymology, the actor's mask, the large-mouthed cover of the face through which an old-time actor was accustomed to speak in representation of his assumed "character" for the hour. The acted "character" was indicated by the words sounded through (*per* and *sonare*, "to sound through") the personal mouth-piece. The real character of the man within *may* be rightly disclosed by the ordinary external speech and conduct of the person who is seen and heard; and, again, it may not be. Hence the vast difference between knowing the character and knowing the person.

With mankind as it is, the ordinary method of arriving at an estimate of another's character is by observing his personal bearing and conduct, and drawing one's inferences accordingly. But wherever one is limited to this means of judgment, his estimates of

character in the person observed are constantly open to revision. An unexpected exhibit of conduct in a new direction by that person necessitates a change of opinion concerning the character back of this conduct. Nothing is finally settled in such a case. Moreover, as all bearing and conduct can be judged fairly only in the light of the character which is back of them, there can never be a full understanding of the relation of these to character in any particular instance, while the character itself is still in question.

It follows, therefore, as a rule, that those who are known only as persons are never *known* at all; nor is the *estimate* of them by those who know them in this way a conclusive one. They are always on trial, doubted or trusted tentatively, according to the confiding or the suspicious natures of those who observe them. They may not be under special suspicion to-day; to-morrow they may have none to trust them. And so it must be, where the persons only are known, and the characters are not.

A knowledge of character may be, within certain limits, instinctive; it may be—it more commonly is—a progressive attainment; at its highest and best, it is intuitive. A child often sees the character through the person, and is instantly won or is repelled in spite of appearances which would seem to prompt to the opposite course. Most persons, who do come to a knowledge of character in others (and a great many never do), arrive at their conclusion by a slow series of successive stages of proof.

To begin with, they know the difference between a person and a character, and they are watching for the signs of character. At last their minds are made up as to the character which is back of the person they are studying, and they rest on their conviction accordingly. In yet rarer instances, he who possesses character himself, and has had much experience in the observation of character in others, recognizes instantly the character in another whom he meets, and—if the recognition be mutual—the two characters

are in accord as soon as the two persons are face to face. In such a case, there is no stage of intermediate—any more than of subsequent—questioning or doubt. Mutual confidence is unlimited from first to last; nor is the instant decision in such a case a hasty one: it is the result of an intuitive knowledge in the premises.

Conduct, when judged by itself, may rightly, or wrongly, indicate the character which is back of it. Conduct is the seen effect of an unseen cause; but conduct is always capable of more than one interpretation, as a result of the spirit and motive and intention which were its prompting. Hence he who would infer the character from the conduct, may be in error as to the cause of that which he looks at as an effect. But character—individual character—is never inconsistent with itself. A man may, in a given case, do that which is *unworthy* of himself, but he cannot do that which is not in some way *consistent* with his real character. The conduct which is an *effect* of

that character must be the conduct of which that character could naturally be the *cause*.

Hence, he who knows the character which is back of the conduct which he observes, is never influenced to revise his judgment of the character, through any new and unlooked-for disclosure in the conduct. He may, indeed, find that his knowledge was before but partial of the possible phases of conduct in the exhibit of such a character as this; but he will not surrender his absolute knowledge of the cause, because of his enlarged understanding of the effects from such a cause.

It is a rare privilege, and a privilege as precious as it is rare, to know a character which can be honored and admired and trusted unswervingly. This knowledge of the character, as distinct from a mere knowledge of the person, it is which is at the basis of every purest and noblest friendship. He who knows his friend's character, never has any doubt because of his friend's conduct. He may revise his opinions as to what his

friend would *do*, but through all changes of this sort he knows what his friend *is*; and his loyalty to his friend is because of what that friend is, rather than because of what that friend does. And all the added experiences in such a friendship are but added proofs of its sure foundation.

This knowledge of the character, rather than of the person, it is, moreover, which underlies all true faith in God as God. To have a firm conviction of God's personality as it is, is not to be compared with the having a knowledge of God's character as it is. He who judges God by God's dealings with him, is always liable to doubt, or even to rebel, when God's dealings with him are very different from what he had hoped for, or had expected. But he who knows God's character as it is, can never have doubt, nor be rebellious, even in the moment of greatest surprise, or of sorest disappointment. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," is the unvarying spirit of every such believer.

To know an admirable character, and to love it, is to become, as it were, a partaker of its admirableness; for there is inspiration and very life in the sympathy which is an outgrowth of such knowledge and such love. Therefore it is that we ought to reach out after a knowledge of the character of Him whose character is Love. And this is the purport of the prayer of the Apostle when he prays "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to *know the love of Christ* [not merely to know Christ the Person, but to know the character of Christ] *which passeth knowledge*, that ye may be filled unto all the fullness of God."

VIII.

ALWAYS IN THE BALANCES.

If a man only knew just when he was to pass under close scrutiny, and have a final judgment made up by his fellow-men concerning his character and ability and spirit and worth, how careful he would be to appear at that time at his very best in every particular! But the trouble is, there is no warning given of these testing times. They come unexpectedly. In fact, they are continual. There is a sense in which a man may be said to be always in the balances, being accurately weighed to the extremest atom, and liable to have any one step up and read clearly his precise moral and intellectual weight on the standard scale beam.

"But know this," says our Lord, "that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched,

and would not have suffered his house to be broken through." But that is not the custom among thieves—to send a postal card in advance, mentioning the hour of their intended call, and asking the householder to be on the lookout for them. So there is always danger from thieves, to be guarded against. Likewise, there is always danger that others will come without warning to judge us, and to carry their judgment of us away with them.

If the young lady had known that the gentleman in whom she is so much interested would call this morning, and would actually meet her, unannounced, in the hall, she certainly would not have been in so untidy and slovenly a dress at this hour. If the young bank clerk had understood that the cashier would be passing through that side street just now, he would not have been coming out of that "sample room" with a cigar in his mouth. If the business man had supposed that he was to fall in the street to-day, and break his leg, and be carried into a drug-store to have it examined before a gaping

crowd, he would perhaps have taken a bath last evening, and have put on clean stockings this morning.

If the members of the family in their upstairs sitting-room realized how distinctly their voices are heard by the waiting caller in the parlor below, there is at least one person there who would be more cautious to refrain from unlovely and complaining words. If the young married couple were aware how thin these hotel partitions are, and who occupies the next room to them this Sunday afternoon, they would never think of being so outspoken in their quarreling, and so bitter in their unkind reproaches of each other. If the railway ticket agent even thought that it was one of the directors of his company who is asking questions of him at the window, he would be a degree less insolent or surly in his answers.

If the prominent church-member away from home, in a foreign country, suspected that a strange face opposite him at the hotel table was that of a man knowing him well, and

sure to report him in his own community, he might not be so free to order wine at his dinner, or to talk aloud with his companions of his delight in the fountains in Versailles—which play only on Sundays, and to visit which must have been in violation of his early Puritan traditions. If the clergyman off on a summer vacation, sitting in unprofessional dress on a hotel piazza, chatting with a group of guests, had any idea that one of that group was a leading man in an important church now looking for a pastor, and that that man was at this very moment seeking to learn the true spiritual depth and earnestness of that Christian minister, he might be readier to withhold a laugh over some irreverent play upon Bible words, or to rebuke by a frown some broad and indelicate allusion by one or another of the party.

If, and if, and if,—if all knew the time of their visitation for a judgment, there would be a great deal more than there is of smoothing down the dress, and pushing back the hair, and tightening up the cravat, and put-

ting on of smiles, and lowering the voice to gentle utterances, and posing for observation, and walking circumspectly before the judges. But the times and the seasons for these judgments cannot be foreknown.

It is said, that at one time a large manufacturing firm in America secured a most remunerative contract from the Russian Government, which would have gone to its immediate rival in business but for the discourtesy which the agent of the Russian Government received at the other establishment, when he called, one afternoon, to make inquiries about the matter in hand without being known as so important a purchaser. Larger interests than this have hinged on an interview of an hour, when the person with most at stake had no idea that his testing time had come.

It is almost forty years ago that an incident in the political history of our country, known to but few, illustrated this truth with unusual power. It was not long prior to a presidential election. The contest in one of the great political parties was so sharp be-

tween three or four of the prominent candidates for the nomination, that it was easily foreseen that no one of these could probably secure the requisite two-thirds vote in the approaching convention. Then there was a conference at the national capitol, among the shrewdest of the party leaders, to select some new man to be sprung upon the convention, at the fitting moment, as a compromise candidate. This conference settled down on two names from New England, and three representative gentlemen were requested to visit these men quietly, and decide which of the two was to be preferred in the emergency. Their report was to settle the question. They went on their mission.

As if casually in his city, these gentlemen called on one of these two possible candidates, and deliberately proceeded to judge him, without, of course, his suspicion of their purpose. Just think of it! In an hour it was to be decided whether or not he was fit to be President of the United States, with a *place in history*, and with almost infinite pos-

sibilities of good or evil. He was unsuspectingly lifted into the scales, and there weighed. The scales were turned southward, and eastward, and westward, that the light might strike the beam from all directions. He was clearly of short weight. The mental verdict of those gentlemen, as they left that man at the close of the interview, was: "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." The other man of the two named was preferred. He was nominated. He was elected. His place is in history.

So it may be with any of you—in a degree. The present hour may be the most important in your life, as settling the public estimate of you, or as deciding your destiny for all time; and this without any knowledge on your part that such is the crisis. The only safe way is to be always at full weight, ready for the balances. It is never safe to speak unkindly or ill-naturedly, with the idea that nobody hears you except those who already know your spirit and your common modes of expression. It is never safe to be un-

cleanly in person, untidy in dress, impure in speech, or irreverent in word or action, under the impression that your course so far will not be made known to the world. It is never safe to visit any place of questionable resort, thinking that your presence there will not be recognized and commented on by those who above all others are most likely to condemn you therefor. It is never safe to count on the probable concealment of anything done by you that you ought to be ashamed of were the fact with all its circumstances known to those whose opinion you would value.

It is never safe to look upon the present hour as any other than the hour of final and irrevocable judgment concerning yourself, your character, and your modes of conduct. Living in view of this truth, you may be prepared always, not only for man's judgment, but for the Lord's; for with the true-hearted disciple of Jesus it is a very small thing that he should be judged of man's judgment, for he that judgeth him is the Lord.


IX.

METHODS OF CHARACTER JUDGING.

Conduct is the expression of character. Conduct is commonly the basis of an individual judgment of character. But conduct is always capable of two opposing estimates. It may even be said that no single action, nor any one course of action, will command the same judgment from all observers; that every line of conduct is liable to be judged as indicative of worth or of unworth of character, of nobleness or of ignobleness of personality, according as it is viewed in the light of the observer's habit of mind toward the right, or again of his sympathy with or antagonism to the person whom it represents.

A young king goes among his people in the infected districts in a time of pestilence, enduring personal discomforts, braving the


danger of death, and speaking words of loving cheer to the panic-stricken. One observer says: "How noble! *There's* royalty in nature, as well as royalty in station!" Another says: "He is shrewd. His risk is no greater than if he were a physician; but his gain is tremendous. He is simply looking out for his kingly interests." A candidate for the Presidency makes a liberal contribution in behalf of a needy community, or he speaks warm words in behalf of a worthy cause, or he goes out of his way to do a personal deed of ministry to a family or to an individual requiring such assistance. A political supporter sees in this an evidence of his candidate's personal worth. A political opponent sees in it an unworthy attempt to influence votes by a show of well-doing. A railroad accident occurs. A young physician who is on the train, or who lives in the vicinity, springs to the help of victims of the disaster, and exerts himself untiringly in their behalf, with no prospect of a fee for rendered service. One looker-on says that that physi-



cian has acted on the prompting of a generous impulse. Another says that the physician's prime motive was a good advertising of his professional services.

So in every line of personal endeavor, where one's conduct is made a basis of reputation, or is looked at as an indication of personal character, on the part of one who is prominently before the public. More than one man of national eminence in our country has even hesitated, on an occasion, to make a confession of his personal faith by openly connecting himself with the Church of Christ, lest this step, which some would commend most heartily, should be deemed by others the selfish prompting of a desire for a reputation as a "Christian statesman." Nor is there any course of conduct which may not, with some plausibility, be looked upon by different observers as indicative of different personal characters.

In the less prominent judgments of character in the sphere of purely private life, there is a similar liability to opposing esti-




mates of conduct as an exponent of distinctive personality. A person shows us some special attention, expresses a peculiar regard for us, evidences a desire to be of service to us and to ours. We know that his course may be the exhibit of an unselfish spirit; while again self-seeking may be at the bottom of it. We are therefore inclined to judge his conduct by our opinion of his character, rather than to judge his character by our opinion of his conduct; and our opinion of his character is likely, in such a case, to be influenced by our feelings, rather than by our reason.

Again, we may confide to two equally intelligent persons the story of some successful struggle of our own with a temptation which was suddenly sprung upon us. One listener is surprised at that weakness of our nature which made us temptable at such a point, and we stand the lower in his esteem in consequence. The other listener honors us for having resisted the temptation; and, in consequence, he gives us credit for a

nobler character than he had hitherto recognized. This difference in judgment may be a result of different characteristics in the two persons judging us; again, it may result from a different feeling toward us, as influencing a perception of the best side of our nature, or of the worst. In either case the difference is not in the recognition of the essential facts involved, but in the deduction from those facts.

Conduct is an exponent of character; but, again, character is an exponent of conduct. We must ordinarily infer what a man's character is by what is indicated in his conduct. But, again, when we know what a man's character is, we may fairly infer the nature and meaning of his conduct. When a man is loved and trusted because of one's conviction of his admirable and trustworthy character, a favorable construction is sure to be put upon all of his conduct by the one who loves and trusts him. As Emerson says of his feeling concerning a friend thus rested on: "I rely on him as on myself; if



he did thus or thus [whatever his conduct was], I knew it was right."

When, on the contrary, a man has, either with or without sufficient cause, come to be counted untrustworthy, his best doing may seem ill doing, because of the supposed ill character back of the doing. It is of the unfavorable judging by one thus newly set in opposition, that Emerson says again:

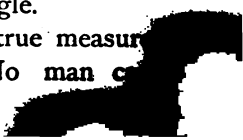
"Though thou wert the loveliest
Form the soul had ever dressed,
Thou shalt seem, in each reply,
A vixen to his altered eye;
Thy softest pleadings seem too bold,
Thy praying lute will seem to scold;
Though thou keep the straightest road,
Yet thou erreest far and broad."

So it comes to pass that character is judged by conduct, and again that character is judged in spite of conduct. And there is a degree of wisdom in both these methods of judging,—a degree of wisdom, and a degree of folly also.

The real measure of a man's character is

what he is at his best, in the direction of his idealward striving. It is what he seeks to be, rather than what he is. At his best, every man is below his highest ideal; and below his best there is in every man that which is quite unworthy of him, and which he is persistently struggling away from. Traces of a man's lower nature are likely to show themselves in the peculiar temptations which try him; and if he refuses to resist these temptations, his character must be judged unfavorably, according to its indulged weaknesses, and not according to some exceptional impulse of good away from them. If, however, a man bravely battles his temptations, and, by Divine help, makes progress against them, he ought to be judged favorably, according to his upward outreachings, and not according to his lowest starting-point of struggle. And he whose life is one of struggle has more of character than he who is unused to struggle.

It is not easy to discern the true measure of character in any man. No man c




the test of the coin by his familiar intrinsic standard of values is surer than any extrinsic test of other comparisons. This, however, would be possible only with a man of long experience in coin-testing. And so in every other sphere; the attainments of a life-time may be evidenced in the correct judgments of an instant.

Peculiarly is this true in the exercise of a high critical faculty in estimates and in judgments. All that a man has ever known or done or felt may be concentrated in an instant's seeing or hearing, critically, in the realm of his highest personal attainments. "The first glance at a picture is the crucial one," said Tintoretto; but only a true artist has power to give unfailingly such a crucial first glance at a picture. A master musician's skilled ear, and only his, might decide correctly upon the possibilities in the voice of a young singer, from hearing a single note of exceptional clearness and power.

An experienced physician could, perhaps, know more of a patient's true condition, in

the sphere of that physician's specialty, from a moment's sight of the patient's face, than a physician of less experience and ability could learn through a careful diagnosis; and there would be no mere chance in this superior discernment. Similarly, a lawyer, or a clergyman, or an editor, of rare skill and experience, might be able to estimate correctly, from a single sentence, the measure of value in a writing submitted to his examination, in the field of his own profession. The instant decision in every such case is simply by the focusing of the rays of light from every direction on a single point of observation, through the object-glass of an instinctive judging process.

To judge correctly of *character* on the instant, without judging hastily, is perhaps the highest attainment in correct instantaneous judgment. Yet important decisions have hinged, and rightly so, on instant judgments of character, which were not hasty judgments. A little child often judges countenances as evidencing character, instantly.



Because an instant unfavorable judgment of us may be a correct judgment, if we deserve an unfavorable judgment, our only safeguard against an instant unfavorable yet correct judgment of ourselves is in our being worthy of a favorable judgment. It is of no use for us to complain that an unfavorable judgment of us seems a hasty judgment, if, in fact, that judgment of us is a correct one.

If, on the other hand, we are to be correct in our instant judgment of others, we must be sure that we have the character, the experience, the training, and the knowledge, which alone can enable us to form an instant judgment of others which is not a hasty judgment. In matters, however, of practical morals, where we already know what is right, we need never fear that an instant judgment against the wrong is a hasty judgment. An instant judgment in every such case is better than deliberation in the hope of a wiser judgment.

XI.

THE TREMULOUSNESS OF TRUE COURAGE.

A stolid indifference to danger is not a sign of true courage. He who never knew what fear is, cannot know what is bravery. The courageous man faces danger with a full understanding of the risks involved. He goes forward, not without fears, but in spite of them. Indeed, a sense of danger is obviously essential to an intelligent and discreet braving of danger.

There *are* men who do not know what fear is; but they are of lesser value, even for fighting purposes. Theirs is simply a brutal recklessness. They are as ready as a bulldog to rush into combat with an enemy, and are hardly more serviceable than he. Having no sensitiveness to peril, they have no hesitation to dare the greatest odds. As

soldiers, they would be worthless on picket, as scouts, on the skirmish line, or wherever else there is need of caution and judgment. Their place is only with the moving battalion under watch and orders. They cannot be trusted to their own direction. Courageous soldiers are ever those who are keenly alive to a sense of peril, and who have a struggle to control their fears in order that they may do their duty regardless of all perceived or imagined dangers. The bravest officer you ever met would tell you not only that he trembled when *first* he went under fire, but that when he goes under fire he always trembles, although now his trembling is inside instead of on the surface, and he is enabled by practice to conceal its appearance. And the bravest men, when put to the test, are commonly those who most doubted their courage until it was tried. The man who has no fear that he shall fail in an emergency, is likely to have nothing but fear when the emergency is fairly upon him.

It is the same in civil life as in military.

The public speaker, for example, who never doubts that he can interest and influence an audience, has little power to move an audience. Recognizing no danger of failure, he does not guard against it. His lack of sensitiveness is contagious. On the other hand, he who realizes that he *may* come short of his opportunity is all the more determined in his purpose of attaining to it. He approaches it with the tremulousness of true courage. And in that very tremulousness is power. What more quickly moves an audience to emotion than the quivering tones of an earnest speaker, who is evidently doing his utmost to control his struggling emotions?

"Why is it," asks a veteran, "that after all these years I find myself trembling at the thought of standing before an audience to speak or to lead in prayer, as if the whole thing were utterly new to me, instead of being an almost every-day custom of life?" The answer to this question is very simple: "You recognize a danger that is real. You

may fail to fill your place wisely. You are properly sensitive to your peril. Your trembling is so far an indication of your power and of your probable success. Your experience enables you to conceal your embarrassment, but not to be without it."

The most eloquent and effective of living orators would, to-day, tell you that they never stand before an audience but with more or less of trepidation. A man may, it is true, talk cold logic without tremulousness, and may appeal to the reasoning-faculties of his hearers in the self-possession of indifference; but if he would reach the heart and sway the emotions of those whom he addresses, he must himself be moved; and to be moved a man must tremble. Unless a speaker has a struggle with *his* emotions, his audience is not likely to have one with theirs.

Who never trembles rarely triumphs. At the best, such a man's success is on a low plane. The poet or the artist who never fears that his work will fall below his ideal has no very lofty ideal. The lawyer who

undertakes the advocacy of any new cause of great importance without a sense of danger to be overcome for his clients, is more indifferent than courageous. If a physician feels that a very sick patient is out of danger because in his hands, his patient's danger is by that very fact increased. One of the most distinguished of our American surgeons has said, that with his greater experience in his profession he is more and more conscious of a trepidation to be controlled in approaching every difficult operation, in fear of the consequences of possible failure. An increase of reputation for skill or ability is an increase of danger to him who has it. It is one of the elements of his risk in each new effort.

On the part of friends there is commonly sensitiveness to the opinions and feelings of each other just in proportion as those friends admit the possibility of a misunderstanding resulting in an estrangement, and shrink from the consequences of being at variance. We are, as a rule, least careful about our conduct before those whom we value least, or with

whom we have least thought of differing. What matters it, we think, if we are approved or condemned by these strangers, or these common-place acquaintances? We are free and careless in their presence, and perhaps appear all the better from our fearless independence; but our best powers are then no more in exercise than is our courage. There is no call for either.

When, however, we are with those whose good opinion is valued by us as beyond all price, and of whose favor we are not yet absolutely sure, how keenly alive we are to the possible impression of our every word and action! What if we should be misunderstood! What if we should fail where success is so greatly to be desired! Our trepidation causes us for the time to feel an embarrassment, and perhaps to show an awkwardness, quite unknown to us in another presence.

This is as natural as the fact that a man who can walk with a firm step, and gracefully, along a low curbstone of a few inches

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in width, or who would not ask more space than that for his feet on the sidewalk, would tremble and move awkwardly on the edge of a house-roof, or in the attempt to cross a yawning chasm on a single narrow stringer, where one misstep would be fatal to him. The sense of danger produces the embarrassment and awkwardness. To remove these there is wanted—not a loss of the tremulousness, but its fuller control. So with the sensitive friends: to put them at ease with each other, there is required a control of their sensitiveness, rather than its absence.

There is a great deal of difference between tremulousness and hesitation. The courageous soldier is tremulous with a nervous sense of the danger he must brave; but he does not hesitate in his purpose of braving it. The effective speaker, the fine artist, the skilful professional man, the earnest seeker after friendship, trembles in the thought of a risk which he has no doubt about taking. "He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea

driven with the wind and tossed. Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." But tremulousness in feeling is not a wavering in purpose.

The most constant thing in all the realm of matter is the magnetic needle; yet what is more tremulous than the mariner's compass? "True as the needle to the pole," is the very synonym of absolute fidelity; but that needle is instinct with motion, and quivers as if it could not be depended on for another second. A touch of the hand jars it. Even a breath of air causes it to tremble. It vibrates with every change of its surroundings. But its ultimate direction is never in doubt. It is so centered on a northward purpose that it will not be held back from its arctic devotion. Its quivering discloses its sense of danger, lest it should be drawn away from that which it seeks determinedly, and toward which it presses with the tremulousness of true courage. How different this from the fickleness of "a wave of the sea driven with the wind and

tossed," having no fixed purpose of direction; turned northward or southward with the change of wind or tide.

As in the sphere of human conduct and human friendships, so in the highest spiritual sphere. The thought of the terrible consequences involved in a failure to secure his loving favor, causes many a longing soul to shrink and tremble as it turns toward the Lord Jesus in a desire to find acceptance with him. The same thought causes even the courageous and heroic Paul to disclose the tremulousness of anxiety, as he tells of his struggle to be faithful, and declares: "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." He who recognizes no spiritual danger from which only the Lord Jesus can rescue and guard him, knows nothing of true Christian courage. He who has never trembled for his soul, is a stranger to the victory of faith.

But victory is attainable in the struggle

for the divine favor, as indeed it is in the struggle for a human friendship. When we are no longer in doubt of a human friend's favor, and have no fear of giving or taking offense in intercourse with that friend, there is no longer a call there for courage with its inevitable tremulousness. The dreaded danger is removed. Confidence has taken its place. Victory is won. So, when the disciple of Jesus realizes that, just as he is, he is accepted and loved by an omnipotent Saviour; that with all his unworthiness he is chosen and cherished by one who is able to keep him from falling or failing,—then it is that the tremulousness of courage in seeking salvation gives place to the restfulness of loving confidence in its possession; and that the truth is realized, that “there is no fear in love;” for “perfect love casteth out fear.”

XII.

TEMPTED TO GIVE UP.

Every once in a while we hear of some man who has failed in the struggle of life; of one who has broken down in character; of one who has fallen into open sin; of one who has abandoned himself to drink; or of one who has put an end to his wretched life. In some cases we wonder at this disclosure of weakness: it is wholly unlooked for in that direction. In other cases it is hardly a surprise to us: "Poor fellow!" we say, "he did have a hard time of it. Life was every way a burden to him."


Whether, however, these obvious failures seem natural or strange, their aggregate number is but small in comparison with the host of those who, while they still remain true, are tempted to give up, and who, perhaps, totter along the very verge of despair

without being suspected of indecision or of faintness of heart and purpose. There are few, if any, of those who accomplish much in the world, or who have possibilities of high achievement, who do not waver at times in their efforts at right doing, and ask themselves whether there is, after all, any real use in persevering longer in this incessant and now apparently hopeless warfare.

It was after all the mighty wonders wrought by Moses as the man of God, in the leading of the children of Israel out of bondage, and after his being with the Lord face to face in the holy mountain, that Moses was tempted to give up his struggle and his charge, and that his cry to God was: "I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favor in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness." Did anybody ever feel that way since Moses? It was when Elijah, the fearless prophet, had met and vanquished the four hundred and fifty prophets

of Baal, that he was tempted to give up in despair, and that lying under the retem-tree in the desert, "he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." Does not that sound like nineteenth-century talk?

Paul, the brave-hearted, unflinching soldier of Christ, declared that he kept himself from becoming a castaway only by an incessant struggle; and that his body would yet have the mastery over him, unless he pounded it mercilessly. Who can hope to hold on and hold up easier than St. Paul? Napoleon Bonaparte in his earlier soldier-life was at the very point of suicide, in despair of accomplishing anything worthy of his endeavors; and he was kept back from self-destruction by a kind and cheering word from a stranger, in the hour when he was thus tempted to give up. No true soldier ever went again and again into battle without being, at one time or another, tempted to hold back, and to fail of fidelity to duty and honor in the emer-



gency. And no good man or woman ever passed through the ordinary battles of everyday life without being now and then tempted to abandon the fight, whatever might be the consequences to one's self or to others.

There have been little children whose hearts so ached over their unsuccessful efforts to be right and to do right, or who so keenly felt the injustice of those who misunderstood and wrongly blamed them, that they have gone away by themselves and put an end to their sad lives—just as Moses and Elijah were seemingly half ready to! And it is because every child is in danger of being thus tempted to give up, that Paul, who knew all about this feeling, writes by inspiration: "Fathers [and he might have added "mothers"], provoke not your children, that they be not discouraged;"—beware how you overtax or unjustly suspect your little ones, who have all they can do at the best to keep from giving out in the struggle which young and old are called to in this life.

There are wives and mothers also,—not

merely the wives of faithless, dissolute husbands, and the mothers of wild and wayward sons, but wives and mothers who are counted by the world as peculiarly favored in their family relations,—who in the exercise of almost divine patience in their doing and enduring and loving and praying, are sometimes tempted to give up in despair over their inability to meet fully the expectations and desires of the one whom they would die for, or over their failure to develop in the child of their heart all the noble purposes and all the tender affections which enter into their ideal of a true boy's character.

There are temptations to give up—in the best friend's effort at proving his friendship by unselfish and persistent services and forbearances; in the most faithful teacher's endeavor to bring forward the backward pupil, or to control and direct the abilities of the brilliant but inconstant one; in the finest scholar's struggle for the mastery of his studies, and of his own mental powers; in the noblest poor man's unremitting contest

with ever-recurring want. The proudest heart is tempted to show weakness under the repeated calls on it to the smothering of love and inclination, at the behest of duty. The gentlest and most submissive spirit, which has borne sorrow upon sorrow uncomplainingly, comes at last, in some hour of new and unlooked-for bereavement, to moan aloud with the Psalmist: "Surely in vain have I cleansed my heart, and washed my hands in innocency; for all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." And the world would stand aghast if it knew how many of those who are counted purest and strongest, and freest from all purpose or thought of evil, are continually in a conscious struggle, tempted to give up; and whose heart-cry at one minute is, "Lord! hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not!" and at the next it is:

"No! I this conflict longer will not wage,—
The conflict duty claims; the giant task.
Thy spells, O virtue, never can assuage
The heart's wild fire! This offering do not ask.

"True, I have sworn—a solemn vow have sworn—
That I myself will curb the self within;
Yet take the wreath, no more it shall be worn;—
Take back thy wreath, and leave me free to sin."

There are both warnings and encouragements in the fact that some of the best men and women in the world—even those foremost in the record of Bible heroes—have at times been tempted to give up in their life struggle. "These things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." If Moses and Elijah were discouraged and ready to die in despair, do not be so restful in your courage as to make you count yourself beyond all danger of proving faithless in an emergency. If Peter could show cowardice when he was surest of being brave and true, and if Paul held his own only by an incessant fight with himself, do not think that you are one whose fidelity and uprightness can never be in question.

Understand, too, that your greatest danger is not already in the past, and that your victory is not yet complete. Not he who has battled bravely for ten years, for twenty years, or for forty years, but "he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." No man can live wholly on his former achievements. It is what he does next, rather than what he has done up to the present time, that tests a man's character, and shapes the public estimate of him. If you are to win in your life struggle, you must hold firm when again you are tempted to give up—as you surely will be. Everything is lost if you do not persevere unto the end.

Moreover, when one or another whom you had counted above suspicion of wrong or of weakness falls or fails before your eyes, instead of wondering over his unaccountable defection, give God thanks that so many who have been tempted to give up are still standing firm. And beware lest you discourage unduly any in your circle of love or of influence who are—all unknown to you and to


the world about them—even now on the very verge of despondency. Speak words of cheer and help to your possibly heart-burdened mother or wife, sister or brother, child or friend, pastor or teacher, scholar or servant. “Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not;” and you may keep these tottering ones from falling, and in the end their triumph shall be yours.

A bright side of this truth is, that some of the best work in the world has been done, and is doing, by men and women who were tempted to give up—and did not. Moses did grand service after he thought there was nothing left for him but to die: so did Elijah. And it is the wives and the mothers who persevere in spite of their almost overwhelming discouragement, who do most for their husbands and children in the long run. The friend who will not give up, when everything but friendship tempts him to abandon the field, is the one who is surest to win the reward of the unfailing and finally appreciated

or in peace; for it is a mistake to suppose that the ancient Greeks looked upon the field of battle as the only place for the display of heroism. Homer applied the term "hero" to men who had nothing to do with war or command; as "the minstrel Demodocus," "the herald Mulius," and the best of "the unwarlike Phæacian people." As an old-time English writer defined the ancient idea of heroism: "Tho' *heroical* be properly understood of demi-gods, as of Hercules and Æneas, whose parents were said to be, the one celestial, the other mortal; yet it is also transferred to those, who for their greatness of mind came near to God." In fact, there has never been a time among men, when Whittier's view of heroism had not its recognition by truest souls:

"Dream not of helm and harness
The sign of valor true;
Peace hath higher tests of manhood
Than battle ever knew."

Sir Philip Sidney is more widely recognized as the hero, in his self-denying proffer



of the longed-for draught of wine on the field of Zutphen, than in any exploit of his knightly life before he lay there dying. And Grace Darling and Florence Nightingale have a higher meed of praise in the world's approval to-day, than Jeanne d'Arc. Yet even *these* heroes of peaceful achievement had their opportunities of high and well-known doing, without which their heroism would never have been recognized by the world at large. Their real heroism, however, was in their real spirit and conduct; not in the publicity of their performance and in the world's recognition of their claim to admiration and honor. So far, all will agree. It is self-apparent that heroism may be evidenced where the world cannot see the proof; but it is not so commonly realized, that much of the truest heroism is in conflicts that are never met, and in battles that are never fought.

Every soldier knows that the truest tests of a soldier's courage are not those occurrences which stand out most prominently in the stories of warfare. It is commonly harder

to overcome one's shrinking from danger while the choice of action is still before one, than to keep up when the unavoidable battle is fairly in progress. George MacDonald says truly: "The direst foe of courage is the fear itself, not the object of it; and the man who can overcome his own terror is a hero and more." The chief struggle of a soldier is before the battle, not during it. When he has decided to enter the fight unflinchingly, his heroic bearing and doing follow almost as a matter of course;

"For courage mounteth with occasion."

During the last year of our civil war, a veteran brigade, which had lost heavily in a week of battles, returned to its camp after its seven days' absence; and, a little before midnight, its remaining officers and men lay down for their long-delayed rest. Hardly had they fallen asleep, when they were started up by a summons to fall into line, and to make a hurried march of four or five hours for the purpose of assaulting, at daybreak, a line of


the enemy's works which they knew to be practically impregnable. Then it was that, in weakness of body and in torpor of mind, a half-awake officer, formally excused by the surgeon from immediate active duty, had to meet the question, all alone in the gloom of the night, whether he would remain there at rest, or rouse up and use his little remnant of life-strength in the effort to cheer his men, as he went on with them to certain death.

It was heroic in that officer to decide to rise up and move forward at that hour; none the less heroic because of the fact that, before the enemy's stronghold was reached, the order for its assault was countermanded, and the world never knew of the occasion which tested those soldiers' heroism. And that incident was but one of a thousand similar occurrences. Officers were even promoted in rank, during that war, for volunteering to lead a forlorn-hope which was not led. Their heroism was thus recognized without the opportunity of its display.

Nor is it in the soldier-life alone that hero-

ism is called out where no conflict appears. There was a tender-hearted, loving child in a New England home, to whom life was all gladness and joy. He loved as he was loved, and he was worthy of all the love which was given to him. One day, as he was starting out for a ride with his parents, he asked them where they were going; and they told him that they were going to take him up to the new cemetery, a beautiful city of the dead by the river's bank, beyond the town. His bright face grew shadowed, and his little lips quivered, so that his father asked him, "Why, Willy, don't you want to go there?" Quietly the trustful answer came back, "Yes, if you think it best, papa." And they rode on silently, in through the broad gateway; on, along the lovely tree-shaded and turf-bordered avenues.

That bright boy seemed strangely quiet, clinging in love to his mother's side, and looking up from time to time with a face that seemed never so beautiful in its restful confidence. As they finally passed out again from



the gateway they had entered, the dear child drew a breath of relief, and looking up in new surprise asked: "Why, am I going *back* with you again?" "Of course you are. Why should you doubt it?" "Why, I thought that when they took little children to the cemetery, they left them there," said that hero-child.

And then it was found that with a child's imperfect knowledge that dear boy had supposed he was being taken, at the call of God, and by the parents whom he loved and trusted, to be buried in the place which he had heard of only as a place of burial. And all by himself he had had the struggle with himself, and had proved the victor. Like Isaac of old, he was a hero in a terrible battle which was never fought. "Yes, yes," you say; "but that was a child's foolish fancy, a mere fear of his imagining." Ay, and the most desperate of all struggles are our struggles with dangers that are unreal. The sorest conflicts for which we must make preparation are conflicts which do not occur; and the battles

wonder why it is that our imaginings bring us face to face with so many dangers which do not exist, and compel us, so often, to prepare for battles which are never fought, it should encourage us to consider, that, if we meet heroically those conflicts which have no existence save in our own fears and fancies, we are, in a sense, gaining the strength and doing the work of God's heroes; for all that God asks of any servant of his is that he be faithful and heroic in that servant's sphere.

“There is no end to the sky,
And the stars are everywhere,
And time is eternity,
And the here is over there.

For the common deeds of the common day
Are ringing bells in the far-away.”



XIV.

COMPOSITE MENTAL PHOTOGRAPHY.

Popular interest has been awakened in what is known as "composite photography;" a process whereby the outlines of several different faces are superimposed one upon another, so that a picture is obtained which represents the features and expression which are common to all the faces making up this composition; while that which is individual to any one of the faces is lost sight of. The purpose of this experiment is the ascertaining of the typical face of the class of persons thus combined; and, like most experiments in their earlier employing, it is a means of bringing out truth and of leading into error.

It was Mr. Francis Galton, the eminent English anthropologist, the writer on the human faculties in their development and in

their transmission by heredity, who first emphasized the value of an experiment of this nature; and he was reinforced in his views by Mr. Herbert Spencer, the sociological philosopher. It was the idea of both of these scholars, that by this means a typical average of a family, or of a race, could be ascertained far better than by any averaging of different direct measurements of the separate features—as has been often attempted. So far the experiment is an obvious success; for the normal physical peculiarities of a race, or of a family, are clearly reproduced in their intensity by such a composition.


But where the experiment of composite photography is a failure, is in the search, by its means, for the higher ideal type of mind or character, as evidenced in the countenance of persons of like legitimate profession, pursuit, or attainments, rather than of the same family or peculiar race. The real measure of power in any person, in his sphere, is that quality or characteristic which is his own, and which differentiates him from, or which

raises him above, his fellows in the same sphere. That which he has in common with others includes first, and more largely, the lower plane of human faculties,—the animal nature, ordinary mental powers, and rudimental spiritual perceptions. Then comes, in smaller measure even though in greater potency, that which is his distinctively; that whereby he shows himself as himself, and makes his peculiar mark in the world.

Composite photography can show the common, lower qualities of those whose faces are brought into combination; but its very process eliminates the qualities which are higher, and which are individual. Every person of the photographic combination has a larger measure of the lower common qualities to contribute to the composition; but the smaller and more potent qualities which he has all by himself, finding no reinforcement from any one of his fellows, are lost sight of in the final result, even though every one of his fellows has an individuality similar to, but not identical with, his own.

It would be easy to show the typical face of a Semite, of an Aryan, of a negro, or of a Mongolian, by a composite photograph; but it would not be possible to show by such a process the distinctive qualities which mark the noblest selected specimens of either of those races, in their exhibit of personal pre-eminence. The typical face of the criminal class in the community may be shown by a composite photograph of a score or more of specimen criminals; for the grosser animal passions and the primitive mental faculties are common to all humanity of every grade of moral tone; but not even the individual traits which give a man exceptional power as a criminal among criminals will find a trace in such a photograph.

On the other hand, in a composite photograph of a like number of men of upright life there will not stand out the particular mental and moral qualities which enable one and another of those men to hold in subjection their grosser passions, and to rise above the lower mental average of their kind. In



composite photography, as in every other sphere, it is easier to note the lower average than the higher exception; easier to disclose what one has in common with those below him, than that which gives him power to be above their level.

Twenty eminent scientists brought together in a composite photograph, will show a face of more than average intelligence, without a single indication of a master mind in any one sphere of thought or of research. Twenty prominent clergymen similarly photographed in a single picture, will present a face of kindly expression and of thoughtful mood, without a single character-line which marks the possession of leadership among men, which in itself evidences experience in life, or which commands the instant respect and regard of an observer. And so in every direction of endeavor to ascertain the higher measure of power in a profession, or in an occupation, by means of composite photography. A typical average can thereby be ascertained; but a typical ideal is out of the question.

But in addition to this composite photography of the human face, there is a kind of mental composite photography which is just now in popular prominence in the community, and which includes the maximum of the error with the minimum of the truth illustrated in the former experiments. It was another eminent anthropologist, Sir John Lubbock, who took the lead in this mental composite photography, by making out a list of the one hundred books which in themselves are supposed to represent the mental pabulum of the average well-educated man. Other experimenters in mind-making, or in mind-diagnosing, have tried their hand at similar lists of books; and again some of the foremost thinkers or writers in England and in America have been asked to name the books which have done most to fill their minds and to shape their characters; as if by this process of mental composite photography the typical average of true mind-furnishing could be prevented in a form which all could recognize—if not secure.

If, indeed, the question were an open one, What are the elements of a common-school education? this sort of composite mental photography would have its value. But when it comes to the question of elective reading by a person who has already passed through the elementary schools, there is no such thing as a list of ten books, or of one hundred books, or of one thousand books, which will naturally tend to bring every reader up to a fair average for a person of his ability and of his opportunities. One man needs one sort of book for his mental quickening, or for his mental curbing; and another man needs just the opposite sort of book. One man needs to read one book ten times over, while another man needs to read ten books of the same general character in quick succession.

An intelligent physician would not be likely to commend to the general public a list of one hundred articles in the realm of *materia medica*, as, in his opinion, the better remedies for the average diseases of the com-

munity, and therefore to be made use of by everybody. The human mind has its peculiarities as distinctively as the human body; and the average human mind is as likely as the average human body to fail in conformity to the standard of perfect health. Hence a wholesale prescription for the average mind is hardly less absurd than a wholesale prescription for the average body. Each mind, like each body, needs individual treatment in order to its individual gain; and he who aims at only a mental average will never attain to the height of a mental ideal.

The composite mental photographs which have been obtained by the recent experimenters on both sides of the ocean are even more shadowy in outline, and, in some instances, more grotesque in expression, than the composite facial photographs which have glared, or have smiled, at us from the magazine pages and from the optician's windows. Distinctive features as common to all the minds represented are not to be seen.

Thus Mr. Gladstone, for example, names

Aristotle, Saint Augustine, Dante, and Bishop Butler, as the four authors who have been most influential with him. Mr. Ruskin adds to his list of Horace, Pindar, Dante, Scott, Pope, Byron, Molière, and others, "good French sensation novels," such as those of Sue and Dumas. Archdeacon Farrar begins with Robinson Crusoe and the Arabian Nights, and includes Peter Parley and Miss Edgeworth. Robert Louis Stevenson couples the Gospel of Matthew with Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. Edward Everett Hale goes back to the New York Spelling Book, Cobwebs to Catch Flies, and Mrs. Barbauld's *Early Lessons*. A composite mental photograph made up from this representative combination would hardly satisfy the maker of any one of the many lists of the proper one hundred books for the average good reader to master; yet it would be as nearly a correct type of the features of a well-trained intellect as any mental composite photograph can be.

That which is a strong man's strength, or

which is a good man's goodness, as shown impressively or attractively in his face, is that which is his own distinctively, as over and above the strength or the goodness which he has in common with the average man of his class in the community. The most satisfactory picture of a man is one which shows him as he is in the direction of his best strivings, rather than one which shows him as he might be if he were not so truly himself.

So, again, in a man's mental qualities, and in his mental attainments, his power and his possibilities are in the direction of his own peculiar characteristics and endeavors; and the best books for any man to read are the books which will tend to develop and to direct the mind of that man, even though they might render no such service to any other man in his particular sphere of life.

XV.

GAIN IN CHARACTER THROUGH ITS EXPRESSION.

One's character is the stamp of one's real-est and innermost self. One's realest and innermost self may be, it often is, very different from one's outer and apparent self. One's character may not be rightly known to others, because it is not clearly shown to others. And, in accordance with the universal law of nature, one's character gains and grows through its free expression; and it limits itself and suffers loss through its forced repression. Hence one's realest and innermost self comes, more and more, to be that self which seeks and finds expression in one's outer conduct and manner.

It is true that the stronger, the deeper, and the nobler is one's realest and innermost personal character, the greater is one's shrink-

ing from the disclosure of that character to unappreciative and unsympathetic eyes; and the more impossible it is for one to give that character its full expression in the outer life. Therefore it is that many a keenly sensitive nature shuts itself up within itself, not selfishly, but in a sense of helpless isolation; and that many a nature of profoundest feeling is both unable and unwilling to express its every emotion with that freedom which characterizes one of a stolid or of a shallow nature.

And therefore, again, it is that many persons are led to suppose that a strong and true nature would lose power rather than gain power by its free expression; and that a nature which is admirable in its original constitution will retain its admirableness, while jealously shielded within one's innermost personality. Yet one's *nature* and one's *character* are not identical, nor are they always alike; and one's character may be the result of indulging, or of resisting, one's natural traits.

It is of the nature of a tree to send its

branches upward. But the gardener may, by clipping and bending, direct the whole strength of that tree toward a downward movement of the branches, until the peculiar character of that tree as a tree is its dwarfed form, its rounded top, and its reversed order of growth. That tree's *character* could not be as distinctive as it is, were that tree's *nature* not as distinctive as it is; yet it is by the enforced expression of the character, contrary to the tree's natural tendency, that the tree's character has become what it is.

By nature a horse is wilful, defiant, and impatient of restraint. But by training, a horse acquires a character of gentle subordination to authority, and of readiness to use all his powers in the willing service of the master he has learned to love. And the distinctive character of a good horse, or of a bad one, gains or loses according to the expression of that distinctive character. If a horse is kept in harness, he adapts himself more and more to the demands of the harness; but if he is left to himself, with no

opportunity of expressing his submission to the harness, he grows restive and fractious, and is in danger of losing the character which gave him his chief attractiveness and worth. As it is in the lower orders of nature, so it is in the higher. Whatever be a man's primal nature, his distinctive character will gradually be shaped and developed by the expression, or by the repression, of his natural characteristics and tendencies.

By nature, a man may be quick-tempered, and liable to bursts of passionate anger. If he were to give free expression to his feelings on all occasions, his character would come to be that of a man of violent and ungovernable temper. But by the repression of his native impulses, that man may come to have the character of one who holds his temper in close control; and he may even pass for one who has no struggle in the mastery of his feelings under provocation. It is true, in fact, that men of calmest exterior and of most uniform equableness of temper are, in many cases, those who were by

nature most inclined to violence of speech and of action. Similarly with men who are by nature methodical or unmethodical, generous or penurious, loquacious or reticent, affectionate or unloving, demonstrative or constrained; their true characters may be developed—are constantly developing—in the line of their natural inclinations, or in the opposite direction, through their unrestrained expression, or their enforced repression, of their natural selves.

For example, two persons are alike by nature, in a warmth of heart, in a longing for sympathy, in a shrinking sensitiveness, in a capacity for unselfish devotedness to one object of affection, and in a self-centered seclusion of innermost personality, that are exceptional in their combination and in their degree. By opposite courses of treatment, these two natures tend to the development of two widely different characters. The preferences and the impulses of the two persons are the same; but the circumstances affecting the one and the other are most unlike.

One of these persons is denied the privilege of that exclusive and sympathetic devotedness to a limited circle which his nature craves; but he is called, providentially, in the line of his business, or of his Christian work, into a sphere where he must adapt himself, as far as possible, in speech and manner of thought, to persons who are in no sense congenial to him, and with whom his nature has at the start nothing in sympathy. Unless he shall succeed in showing an interest in these persons, and in winning an interest, on their part, in himself, his mission will be a failure.

He cannot bring himself to act insincerely in this effort, but he can bring himself to see something of the personal needs and the personal worth of those to whom he is sent, from *their* standpoint of being; and this enables him to force, as it were, a real sympathy with them to the extent of his mission in their behalf. Gradually by the expression of this enforced sympathy, and by a persevering endeavor to do that which is not in the line of his tastes and preferences, but


which is in the line of his duty, he comes to an apparent ease and heartiness of manner with any and all whom he meets; so that he is counted a man of wide and varied sympathies, who finds his chiefest pleasure in being all things to all men, in order to win their favor and to enjoy their grateful appreciation of his loving labors in their behalf.

There is nothing in this man's character which is inconsistent with this man's nature. Indeed, were the nature not as it is, the character which manifests itself could not have existed. The realest and truest self has been all the while struggling for expression, and certain phases of that self have found their expression—although in another direction than its normal one; while the other phases of that self have been denied all expression. Hence that character is as it is.

The other person of these two has no such special call to the enforced expression of his kindlier feelings in a broader sphere; while he, also, is denied the free indulgence of his longings for seclusion in congenial compan-

ionship of soul. The warmth of heart is there, and there is the longing for sympathy; but the shrinking sensitiveness and the self-centered seclusion hold back the warm and longing heart from disclosing its feelings where they might not be reciprocated, or indeed comprehended. Repression of feeling causes him weariness of very life. The better portion of his nobler nature is not called into action. Unsatisfied longing and disappointment of expectation bring questionings of mind as to the worthiness and the affectionateness and the fidelity of others.

As a result, the character of this person comes to be, more and more, that of one shut up within himself and out of loving sympathy with his fellows. He is looked upon as a man of cold reserve, and of distant and haughty demeanor; and for himself he sometimes wishes he were actually a hermit, or at least were more of a recluse than he is. Yet his nature is identical with that of the person who is supposed to be in warm-hearted readiness to show sympathy with



everybody. The contrast in the two characters is only in that difference which comes through the expression, or the repression, of the better nature common to the two.

As it is in this extreme instance in a single sphere, so it is, in a measure, in every realm of being. Character gains through its expression, and loses through its repression. Love grows through its expression. Sympathy grows through its expression. Knowledge grows through its expression. The artistic sense grows through its expression. The religious sentiment grows through its expression. The capacity for instruction, for administration, for command, grows through its expression. The more a man does in any line of wise endeavor, the more he can do in that line, and the more of a man he is in that line. And the refraining from the free expression of love, or of sympathy, or of knowledge, or of the artistic sense, or of the religious sentiment, or of the power of instruction, of administration, or of command, both limits and lessens that which is thus repressed.

To possess and to exhibit an admirable personal character is a duty incumbent on every one. In order to possess such a character, its exhibit by its expression is a necessity. He who does not endeavor to express those traits and qualities which are the exhibit of an admirable personal character, cannot hope to retain such a character, even if it were his by nature; and he who does endeavor to express them, can hope to gain the character which they represent, even though he lacked it before.

In the realm of character, as in the material realm, not only is it "more blessed to give than to receive," but more is received by giving than by receiving; and while "whosoever hath, to him shall be given," whosoever giveth, to him shall be given, "and he shall have more abundance." Character proves itself and improves itself by its wise expression.

XVI.

THE COST OF BEING POLISHED.

Everybody wants to appear polished. Almost everybody thinks that he, or she, is polished. But not everybody takes into account the cost of being polished; nor would everybody submit cheerfully to the polishing process, if its cost were fairly foreseen.

To be polished is to shine; and to shine in one's sphere is a well-nigh universal craving. If men could shine by nature, shine of one's unaided substance as the sun shines, shining would be without cost, and as easy a thing as it was free. But innate luminousness is not a common characteristic of the human race. There are those, it is true, who shine from birth, who from beauty of person attract the eye and dazzle the sight of those about them. But this shining is a rare and

an exceptional quality, and its nature is rather that of the glow-worm than of the sun; moreover, such shining is not a polish; for a polish is never natural, but is always acquired by rubbing or friction, as the word itself would indicate.

If men could shine by reflection, as the moon shines, shining would still be an easy matter for all who were in the rays of a bright light. There certainly are those who shine from their relation to others, whose brilliancy is made apparent by their reflection of the light of a distinguished parent, or partner, or associate, or friend, of one with whom they are linked by their fortunes or their labors; but even then their shining indicates a personal polish which makes their reflection of light a possibility. Proximity to a brilliant man does not in itself ensure brilliancy. If one has the polish to shine in reflected light, that polish had its cost—as polish always has. The cost of being polished is inevitable to the polished one; and that cost is, in the realm of personality,

always—as it is, ordinarily, in the field of mechanics—great in proportion to the hardness and real worth of the thing polished.

Wax is easier polished than leather; leather than wood. Woods take the highest polish of which they are capable, according to their relative hardness of fiber and closeness of grain. Lead is easier polished than silver; pewter than bronze. Marble receives a polish by friction which would make no impression on granite; but when granite is once fairly polished, its lustre will show long after the marble has crumbled or tarnished. It is a small matter to give a polish to glass or agate in comparison with the work necessary to bring out the brilliancy of a ruby or a sapphire; and a diamond is hardest of all to polish, as its worth and brilliancy give it, when polished, the pre-eminent place among precious stones.

A similar gradation is found in all personal polish. The polish of the manners is easier secured than the polish of the intellect, of the intellect than of the character. A dan-

cing-master can give his pupils all the polish that they are after, or that he has to supply, in a hundredth part of the time taken by a college faculty to polish up their students. A table-waiter, or a footman, can secure his requisite polish in less time than a good salesman. The polish of the sales-room is easier of acquisition than the polish of the parlor. The highest society-polish is not so difficult of attainment as the classic polish of an orator or a poet.

Yet it must not be forgotten that, in the lower spheres as in the higher, all polish has its inevitable cost—a larger cost than most people suppose. If one is a polished dancer, or table-waiter, or salesman, or conversation-alist, or entertainer, it has cost him a great deal of friction to become so. And if a man speaks or writes with polish, it has cost him far more. The polish of manners may be a polish of veneering, of an overlaid surface quite different from the main body; but the polish of the intellect or of the character must be of the main stock—of the polished

one's personality. In both cases, however, it is a polish that gives evidence of its cost.

Polish always comes through friction; and friction rubs off excrescences, and smooths down roughnesses, and wears away protuberances. Friction, in one's personality, hurts. It requires courage to bear up while being polished. It is never a pleasant thing to have one's surface peculiarities ground down to their base. The polishing process lowers one's pride, cuts one's fancies, and seems for the time to be destroying one's very self. And the more there is to one's intellect and character, the greater is the cost of one's polishing; and the more essential is the need of one's full recognition of that cost, and of a heroic acquiescence in it.

The foremost English biographer of the poet Goethe suggests a felicitous illustration of this truth, although he uses it in a lower sense: "The diamond, it is said, can be polished only by its own dust; is not this symbolical of the truth that only by its own fallings-off can genius properly be taught?

And is not our very walk, as Goethe says, a series of falls?"

It is not the chipping off of the diamond's surface that polishes the diamond; but it is by the wise use of the diamond dust or chip-pings, in the hands of a skilled lapidary, that the diamond's polish is finally secured. It is not the making of mistakes that makes a man; but it is the wise use of mistakes that enables a man to be made—to become a polished man in his best sphere.

"Instruction," says Froude, "does not prevent waste of time or mistakes; and mistakes themselves are often the best teachers of all." Or as Coleridge says, in encouragement of a wise use of the diamond-chippings in character polishing:

"Mother-sage of self-dominion,
Firm thy steps, O Melancholy!
The strongest plume in Wisdom's pinion
Is the memory of past folly:"—

that is, the folly being *past* and not again present; for "a sound discretion is not so

much indicated by never making a mistake, as by never repeating it."

Whenever we see the light and glow of a beautiful character, we may know that its illuminating power came through its slow polishing by its own diamond-dust, at the hands of the Great Lapidary. And we can be sure that the cost of that polishing included long days and longer nights of suffering under the soul-friction that brought the polish. And when we wince and groan under the friction of our own sensitiveness, in view of our manifold blunders, and our manifold failures, we may feel that all this is inevitable if we would be so polished as to shine gloriously in the reflected light of the Sun of Righteousness. Diamond-polishing can be compassed only by diamond-dust friction. And the character that has the closest diamond grain has anything but the diamond brilliancy to begin with:

"In this dull stone, so poor, and bare
Of shape or luster, patient care
Will find for thee a jewel rare.

"But first must skilful hands essay
With jewel dust to clear away
The film which hides its fire from day."

The heavy cost of character-polishing by character-friction is unavoidable, and it pays well in the end; but it is none the less grievous at its time, for all that. "All chastening [even for one's polishing] seemeth for the present to be not joyous, but grievous: yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit [or result] unto them that have been exercised [have been polished] thereby, even the fruit of righteousness."

XVII.


THE ATTITUDE OF WISDOM.

If all those who would like to be wise, and to be known as wise, would put themselves in the attitude of wisdom, there would soon be more wise persons in the world, and more wisdom among the sons and daughters of men. But with the increase of wisdom, there would be a corresponding decrease of the claim, and of the thought, of being wise. The wiser one is, the less confidence he has in his wisdom, and the more conscious he is of a lack in that direction. Indeed, one who counts himself wise is thereby shut out from the attitude of wisdom; while he who is in the attitude of wisdom is thereby shut out from counting himself wise.

But what is this attitude of wisdom? It is important to know that, to begin with. The attitude of wisdom is the attitude of a child;

it is child-likeness, in the desire and in the readiness to learn. It is the attitude of one who feels the need of being taught, and who craves instruction. It is not the attitude of one who wants to know, but the attitude of one who wants to learn; for there is a marked distinction between wanting to know and wanting to learn. There are very few persons who do not want to know; but there are a great many persons who do not want to learn. Knowledge is tempting to almost everybody. Learning is attractive to only here and there a person.

One enters a gallery of paintings or sculpture, a library, a museum, a cathedral, an exposition of scientific apparatus; of course he would like to know all about its contents; it would be a gratification to him to feel that he had this knowledge, to be able to show that he had this knowledge, to find himself competent to make use of this knowledge; all this is well, as commendable in its way as it is common on every side; but this desire for knowledge is not in itself a desire to learn.



He who is in the attitude of wisdom, in such a place, is impressed first with a sense of his ignorance; *that* is not always the case with a man who would like to know all about these things. Then, his desire is to be taught, to learn then and there what he would not be likely to learn elsewhere. It is not learning for the sake of knowing, that he craves, but learning for the sake of learning; not learning in order that he may know, but learning because he does not know; not learning in order to swell his supply of knowledge, but learning in order to diminish his stock of ignorance. That attitude makes him a continual learner, where learning is a possibility. That attitude is child-likeness, without which wisdom is an impossibility.

Solomon was in the attitude of wisdom, when he received wisdom from the Lord; indeed, until a man is in the attitude of wisdom he cannot expect the Lord to give him wisdom. Solomon was doubtless as well informed and of as well trained a mind as most young men of his day, when he was called

to kingly service, as the successor of his father, David. But Solomon's thought, in the face of his new duties and responsibilities was: "I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in;" and his longing was for wisdom. He knew enough to know that he did not know enough, and he wanted to learn, because he felt his need of learning.

And because of his attitude as a seeker for wisdom, Solomon's prayer was answered in its very offering. "Because thou hast asked this thing [because thou hast felt this need, and hast asked accordingly]; . . . behold, I have done according to thy word: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee." He who is in the attitude of wisdom, like Solomon when he offered that prayer, already has a measure of wisdom like Solomon's, as a cause and as a result of being in that attitude.

When One wiser than Solomon was asked, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of

heaven?"—Who among the servants of the Messiah is greatest?"—"he called to him a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." And so, by the testimony of Him who spake as never mere man spake, as well as by the illustration of him who was wisest among mere men, the attitude of wisdom is the attitude of child-likeness.

But, it may be asked, must one *always* count himself a child? Can one never feel that now he has learned; that at last he has come to know? Must he be continually in doubt about himself and his acquirements, so that he is a hesitating questioner, before his duties and his responsibilities, all his life long? Did Solomon feel, to the day of his death, that he was but a little child, not knowing how to go out or come in? In

answer to these questions, it is sufficient to call attention to the difference between learning and teaching; between considering one's duty in advance, and acting in the line of one's recognized duty. When one is called to teach, he must show his wisdom in declaring the truth as he knows it. Not questioning but answering, not learning but instructing, is then his mission. When he is summoned to immediate action, he must act immediately, on the knowledge, and with the wisdom, which is already his. That is a very different matter from facing a teacher, from facing a subject of thought, or from facing an object of interest, without any call to teach or to act, but with the possibility of standing in the attitude of a learner, in order to learn something more.

It is doubtless true, that Solomon acted promptly and wisely in every emergency, in the exercise of that wisdom which was given him in response to his request for it. But it is probably also true, that to the day of his death Solomon approached every new sub-

ject of study, and every fresh case for consideration, in that child-like attitude in which he stood before God at Gibeon, seeking to learn in order that he might supply the lack of knowledge which oppressed him; for that is the sure attitude of wisdom, and of the truly wise man, always.

There is no more unfailing mark of the difference between the wise man and the unwise man, between the man who is sure to make good use of his present knowledge and to gain in knowledge and in its wise use steadily, and the man whose wisdom is limited, and is not likely to advance beyond its present limits,—than in the child-like attitude of the one, and in the self-confident, or the self-seeking, attitude of the other. The wise man is ever in the attitude of the needy learner, in the presence of any person or theme or thing from which, or about which, learning is a possibility. A truly great scholar is always a learner. When he talks with another, he wants to learn, he expects to learn, he tries to learn; not what he can hear, but

what he can learn, is his thought. A moderate scholar or an inferior person is more likely to tell what he knows, or to be indifferent to what is said to him, in conversation; because he does not feel a pressing need of learning, or because he does not think he can learn from this source. It is the same in study. The great scholar is always seeking to learn, through his studies; not what he can read, but what can he learn, is his thought.

Pick out, for example, the men of greatest ability in our Bible Revision companies, and you will find that you have chosen men of a child-like attitude, who are unceasing learners. If, perchance, there be one man of their number who thinks he knows it all, he is the one man who never learned at all. There, as elsewhere, "if any man thinketh that he knoweth anything, he knoweth not yet as he ought to know." So also it is in the sphere of judicial ability. The foremost jurist approaches each new case with the same child-like spirit, in his desire to learn the truth concerning the principles which it involves,

as in his earliest experience. One who had been nearly thirty years on the bench said, not long ago, that he was now less confident of his judgment concerning any case submitted to him than a quarter of a century ago, and that he now studied and heard arguments with an ever-fresh desire to learn. Not what he thinks, not what he already knows, but what he can newly learn, is his aim in every new case.

So again in the realm of art. The ordinary observer wants to know all about this painting, or this piece of sculpture, or this cathedral at which he looks. He glances at the guide-book, he hears or remembers what one and another has said about it, he compares it hastily with other like or unlike works of art which he has seen, in order that he may have an opinion about it. That is his way of trying to have knowledge on the subject. But the wise observer bears himself very differently. His thought is, Here is a masterpiece of art which I am wholly incapable of comprehending, in all its power, at a glance.

Now, what—even if no more than one simple thing—can I learn from it, or about it, while I am here before it? I must not let my impressions, or my preferences, sway me. I must not be satisfied with what others have to say. I am here to learn, and I must stand in the attitude of a learner, the attitude of wisdom, in order that I may learn. Not what he can see, but what he can learn, is the thought of such a man.

Sir Joshua Reynolds said, that when he first looked upon the frescoes of Raphael in the Vatican he could not see their beauty; but with his art-training he knew enough to know that he could not trust his instant judgment to pass intelligently on the work of a master in art. He was wise enough to feel that his disappointment must be a result of his own ignorance; therefore he stood before those paintings in the attitude of a learner, which is the attitude of wisdom. Day after day he looked as a learner, and he learned through looking. And it was because of his constant attitude that he was a

constant learner. No one can think of Ruskin as lacking in confidence and positiveness as an art-teacher; but his attitude before any work of art is as a learner. After writing a library on art-topics, he can go to Florence and spend three months in the attitude of a learner, in a single old church there; because he is a wise man, in his sphere, and therefore he places himself in the attitude of wisdom.

Shadowy, and even profitless, as this distinction may seem, to the minds of some, its practical results are of incalculable importance. The highest results of attainment in scholarship, in science, and in true culture, are ever and only to him who stands before truth in the attitude of a learner; in the child-like attitude of wisdom. He who desires knowledge more than he desires to learn, will be limited in his gain of knowledge, and yet more limited in its wise use. He, on the other hand, who more desires to learn than to gain knowledge, is surer to be a learner, and in the end to have not only knowledge, but the power of using knowledge. Knowl-

edge without wisdom is of little worth. Wisdom is not given to him who refuses to maintain the attitude of wisdom. Knowledge puffeth up. Wisdom buildeth up.

“ Knowledge, a rude unprofitable mass,
The mere materials with which Wisdom builds,
Till smoothed and squared, and fitted to its place,
Does but encumber whom it seems to enrich.
Knowledge is proud that he has learned so much;
Wisdom is humble that he knows no more.”

Lord, “so teach us to number *our* days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

XVIII.

THE SECRET OF CONTENTMENT.

Before looking for the secret of contentment, it may be well to consider what contentment is, and whether it is really worth seeking or having. There is a popular idea of contentment which is anything but attractive to a noble mind. That idea represents contentment as taking a contracted view of one's privileges and duties; as being in a measure indifferent to one's lot; as growing out of, or as tending to, slothfulness and inactivity. If that be the correct idea of contentment, the less there is of it in the world the better it will be for the world; and the only good reason for our learning its secret would be in order to its avoiding.

Contentment is literally the being contained within limits; it is the recognizing of one's bounds, and the acquiescing in one's

destiny; it is the satisfying one's self with what one has, or fairly can have. Contentment does not necessarily involve a contracted view of life. One who sees in his present station a center of world-wide influence and of world-wide opportunities, may be contented with, and in, his sphere; but his limitations can hardly be called contracted.

If a man believes that it is his destiny to compass results that shall influence the lives of millions, and affect the welfare of coming generations, he may be contented to accept that destiny, without being indifferent to the magnitude of its responsibilities. And if he believes that in the accomplishing of his proper life-work he must have an endless life-struggle, he may be contented to live in unceasing and tireless combat with his surroundings; and if this be his case, who would call him slothful or inactive?

Contentment is of one's self rather than of one's condition. It depends not so much on where one is, or what one has, or what

one is doing or enduring, as upon one's personal view of his place, of his experiencings, and of his possessions, in their relation to his present duty and to his ultimate happiness and welfare. A pleasure-seeking passenger will sometimes chafe and worry under the discomforts and annoyances of a railroad and its appointments, when he is making the one trip of his life in that direction; while a conductor on that same road—who is every way as energetic and ambitious a man as that passenger—passing over the route twice a day, six days in the week, year in and year out, is eminently contented and composed as he journeys to and fro; because that is not only his way of providing for his family just now, but it may prove a stepping-stone to the general superintendency of the road, or to its presidency.

An inefficient and unambitious clerk in any large business establishment is more likely to be discontented under any added pressure of work, or any special extension of hours, than a clerk who makes that busi-

ness his own and rejoices in its signs of prosperity. The narrower the man, just there, the greater his discontent in his sphere. Persons who find it difficult to be contented with the limits of a three-story brown-stone house in the city will content themselves at a fashionable seaside or mountain hotel in July or August—within quarters to which they would be ashamed to stint their servants in their city residence.

The true secret of contentment is in one's conviction that the place he is now in, is his place for now; that the work he is now doing is the work that now needs doing, and that he ought to do now; that he is better situated, at the present moment, for effort or for endurance that shall tend to his own highest good, and to the good of the persons and of the interests dearest to him, than would be possible elsewhere in all the universe; that, in fact, his present sphere, his present opportunities, and his present possessions, are those which above all others he ought to desire, and which he would desire, if he only knew

enough about them and their tendings. Such a conviction as this may have its approach on a lower sphere, but in its fulness it is possible only to him who is a faith-filled child of God, assured that his Father has assigned him to his place and duty, and has permitted to him his possessions and surroundings, in unfailing wisdom and in limitless love.

There is a measure of contentment to the good soldier at his post of regularly assigned service; to the earnest worker who comes and goes at the direction of his employer, or, at the dictates of his own hopes or judgment; and to the unselfish seeker of the welfare of those whom he loves, so long as he is sure that his labors or his privations are promotive of their happiness; but there is always a recognized limit to the wisdom of one's earthly commander or employer, and of one's self; and as soon as one reaches out beyond limits he has discontent. Contentment is the keeping within limits. Only when one feels that He who directs him and

directs for him has no limits of either wisdom or love in this directing, can he be

"Shut up
In measureless content."

Only then can he have no possible cause for discontent or doubt.

If we have not faith in God as our God; if we do not believe that God loves us and guards us, and makes all things work together for good to us as his loved ones; then, indeed, it is hard for us to be contented; and it ought to be. Discontent is our duty while in such a state; and a change of state is the only secret of possible contentment to us. But if we are God's loved ones, through faith in his Son; if we believe that God has taken us into his family circle, and into the scope of his providential plans for the universe,—then, certainly, we may be sure that he rules and overrules in all things for *our* welfare, and that he is now doing for us better than we could possibly do or desire for ourselves.

Our observations and experiences in life are certainly sufficient to show us that if we were to choose for ourselves in our lot or our possessions or our surroundings we should probably choose to our own harm. We know that nothing would be worse for a little child than to be permitted to have its own way; that that child would be as likely to take an open razor as a harmless toy, and liable to swallow poison rather than nourishing food when both were before it. The hope of a child is in parental control within wise limitations. A child of God needs a like control within the limitations which only God can now fix wisely; and a consciousness of this truth tends to the child of God's contentment.

If, indeed, we are not contented in one sphere or lot, as God's children, we should not be likely to be in another. The spirit of self-confidence on the one hand, and of distrust of God on the other, which would make us unwilling to accept God's orderings and God's limitations as unmistakably wisest

and best, in the place where we now are, would surely bring a like result in any other place to which God could assign us. Archbishop Whately said, that, as a rule, it was harder to live within a large income than a small one; or, in other words, that to the man who had not learned how to bring his expenditures within his income while it was of moderate size, temptations to extravagance would increase more rapidly than his income, as that was extended. And so it may be said of the man who has not learned to accept God's ordering as wise and loving in the humbler sphere of his duty and privilege; the wider and the fuller the field which God assigns to him, the larger the sweep of his cravings beyond.

He who does not have contentment in poverty, or in sickness, or in solitariness, or in hardships, when *this* is his lot in life, would not have contentment in wealth, or in health, or in society, or in ease and luxury, were he newly called to this condition. And as a matter of fact it is evident that there is

more of real contentment in this world where there is seemingly least occasion for it, and more of discontent where there is smallest apparent excuse for it. He who is not contented where God puts him on earth would be discontented in heaven; and discontent would make a hell of heaven—or earth.

But being contented with one's present lot and sphere for the present, does not preclude the possibility of desiring and expecting and purposing to be in another lot and sphere by and by. Because the good soldier is now on outpost duty by his commander's order, it does not follow that he expects to live and die there; although he would be willing for that, if that were his commander's direction. The soldier's hope is of other service by and by and elsewhere; better service for him for *then*, but not better for *now*. So with the faithful follower of Christ. His place at this moment is, to him, the center of the universe *for this moment*. But another moment all may be different. He lives but a moment at a time, accepting his assignment of place


and duty, and his apportionment of supplies, as his Master shall direct, for each moment. It may be that his duty of this moment is in making ready for the next; that his duty in this sphere is in struggling to get out of this sphere. If so, he is contented in this struggle of preparation, or of performance.

If a man finds himself sliding down a slope he is not to be contented to slide; but he is to be contented to hang on as for dear life, and to scramble up that steep as if he were scaling the battlements of heaven. In this understanding of one's duty, the most contented man may be the most sublimely enthusiastic man, and the most terribly energetic man, imaginable. He stands in the place of places, where he ought to stand; he is set to do the work of works, which he ought to do; and he has all the power of God pledged to his supply and support, in order to his final triumph. There is no narrowness, no indifference, no sloth, in such contentment!

"The noblest mind the best contentment has."

Contentment is, indeed, often a duty, when satisfaction is not. Every child of God ought to be contented with, or for the time being contained within, the lot and the sphere to which God has assigned him. But no child of God ought ever to be satisfied with his present lot and sphere, so that he has no desire and no hope for higher attainment and for better things beyond.

A lad who is compelled to drudge away, with scanty pay, in the lowest place in some great establishment, in order to keep body and soul together, or to provide for his loved mother, has a duty to be contented in that position, while it is the best that he can yet secure. But it is not by any means that lad's duty to be satisfied with that position for all his life; as if it were the highest and best to which he could aspire. So, again, if a man were to find himself maimed and bruised at the base of a cliff, whither he had fallen by no fault of his own, it would be his duty to be contented in his lot of peril and suffering just then and there; but it would not be his



duty to be satisfied to remain in that condition, if he could hope to obtain relief by his own struggling, or by his shouting for help, or by his praying for some providential relief.

An unsatisfied spirit is indeed an inseparable accompaniment of a rightly contented spirit. The same Apostle who declared that he had learned in whatsoever state he was therein to be content, said also that the one thing he was always doing was reaching out from the state he was in with an unsatisfied striving after that which was yet in advance of that state. And so long as a man is a true man he will find his contentment in being unsatisfied. He will know that he is just now in the best place God knows of for his present lot, and that God has a still better place in store for him.

XIX.

CHARACTER INDICATED IN MODES OF THANKING.

An expression of thanks, in the ordinary intercourse of life, is one of the commonest exhibits of natural courtesy. It is the instinctive manifestation of personal civility. It is both given and received, as a matter of course, between those who are on the same plane, and again between those who are recognized as on very different social levels. It comes to the lips of the giver, and it strikes the ear of the receiver, a hundred times a day, without a thought, on the part of either, of its special meaning, or of its special prompting, so utterly conventional has its use become in every rank and walk of life. Yet the very word "thank" is in its root form the same as "think." It indicates a thought, or thinking; the having in mind, and the


bearing in mind gratefully, that which has called it forth. It is, in its primitive conception, an assurance and a pledge of gratitude. And because this is the root idea of thanks, the various conventional and unconventional modes of thanking are indications and expressions of the personal character of the one who gives the thanks.

As in the matter of salutations, so in the matter of expressing gratitude, conventional forms come to take the place of hearty and spontaneous exhibits of thought and feeling. Men say "Good-by," without any idea of praying "God be with you." And they even say, "How do you do?" or "How-dy-do," or yet more bluntly, in some sections, "Howdy," with no intelligent purpose of an inquiry into another's health; and often without even an interrogative form or tone in the expression itself. Similarly, men say "Thank you," or, as the bluntest and most unmeaning of all tolerated forms of a civil recognition of a favor received, "Thanks," without any thought of gratitude felt or expressed. And hereby, in

the very absence of "thinking" in "thanking," men disclose their character—or, so far, their lack of character.

Any man who really *thinks* of giving *thanks* would never say "Thanks" as an expression of his thought of thanks. He would want to say more than *that*. He would be sure to make the matter personal so far, at least, as to say "I thank you," or "I am grateful to you." And just in proportion as a thought of thankfulness prevails with a man will that thought find its expression in the words and manner of his thanking. It is true that thought and feeling are not always called for in any large measure in the ordinary intercourse of the world, either in salutations or in the recognition of the common civilities of life. Hence it is that the conventional forms, in both cases, are accepted as current counters to take the place of real coin.

Thus it is, for example, that the abbreviated form "Thanks" has come to be employed so widely as a sufficient recognition of the ordinary minor ministries of a servant,



There is no intention of showing an exceptional degree of thought or feeling in such a matter. Thus it is, also, in the more common courtesies between strangers, as when a gentleman gives another the precedence as the two come together at the doorway of a public building, or as they meet on a crowded pavement; or as when a gentleman picks up a handkerchief or a fan which a lady near him has dropped, and hands it to her, touching his hat as he does so. The simple word "Thanks," in either instance, is designed quite as much to show the good breeding of the one who utters it, as it is to show any gratitude to the one to whom it is uttered.

Even in a matter like this the exceptional character of a man or of a woman will be sure to show itself, by a departure from the purely conventional forms which "society" has prescribed, in an expression of thanks which clearly shows thinking; but exceptional character is not to be looked for on every side. If, however, a gentleman rises from his seat in a crowded street-car in order

to allow a lady to take it, it would indicate a lack of true womanly thoughtfulness and consideration on her part for her to say simply "Thanks;" as she might say to a hotel waiter who handed her a glass of water at the table. A special act of self-denial like that of the gentleman in a case like this, calls for a thoughtful recognition of the service by the lady; and her character is indicated by her manner and words in the premises.

But it is at those times when there would seem to be a clear cause of personal gratitude, that character is most plainly indicated in the manner of thanking. Real thankfulness, as a result of real thoughtfulness, will never be satisfied with mere conventional forms of expression. It must show itself as itself, not as other people expect it to be exhibited. And it is when an exceptional token of loving interest in another is received and acknowledged as if it were an ordinary courtesy, or as if it were on the same plane with the customary gifts on a wedding occa-


sion, on a birthday, or at the Christmas season, that the heartiest words of *formal* thankfulness must be recognized by the receiver, and be felt by the giver, as out of place and utterly insufficient.

When the service rendered is a service which he who does it would never be expected to render in the ordinary round of social courtesies, or when the gift bestowed is one which must have cost the giver toilsome effort, or manifest self-denial, it would be almost heartless to acknowledge it in set phrases of conventional thanks. And here it is that character shows itself in the discerning of the true measure of the service or the gift, and in the expression of the corresponding measure of thanks for it.

It requires character to see when the thanks are due to the spirit which prompted the service or the gift, rather than for the service or the gift itself. If the service or the gift be the chief thing proffered and accepted, then, indeed, a due proportion of hearty words of thanks will meet the case. But if the service

or the gift of the hour be a simple indication of a spirit which would find no limit but opportunity and ability, in the same direction, then the thinking of the receiver must find its expression in thankings which are unconventional, and which transcend the bounds of ordinary forms of speech. Many a full heart has been hurt by the very freeness of thanks for a service or a gift which has evidently been looked at only in the light of its intrinsic value; when that same heart would have been made joyous by seeing that the receiver so fully appreciated the motive of the giver or doer as to be unable to return other thanks than a speechless, tearful look.

To lay special emphasis upon the minor element in a subject of thanks, and to ignore or to undervalue the more important factor in that subject, is to indicate a lack of character, and to disappoint accordingly the one to whom the thanks are rendered. If, for example, it were found necessary to secure new life's blood by transfusion, as a means of rescuing one from death, and a friend should



instantly bare his arm to the lancet, and sit by the bedside of the patient while the transfer of his heart's blood was made for the other's benefit, what would be thought of a patient who should look up at the close of the operation and say to his self-surrendering friend, "I thank you for your kindness in helping me at this time. You are very good to have delayed attention to your business for this half-hour for the sake of assisting me;" or, "I'm very much obliged to you for this gift of a pint of blood, and I shall remember it gratefully"?

Yet there is a great deal of this kind of thanking in the world,—where the mere time taken for the service rendered, or the mere worth of the material gift bestowed, is made prominent in the expression of thanks, while the stintless devotion of the loving one seems unrecognized in its pre-eminence. And such thanking is a cause of bitter disappointment to the one thanked.

And, again, there is thanking which shows thinking—and feeling which is deeper than

thinking; and which also shows the exceptional character of the thinking and feeling thinker. And nothing in human experience is more grateful to the heart of one who gives to or who does for another gladly, than thanks which are thus discriminatingly and heartily appreciative.

A son has planned a surprise gift to his mother at a cost of some self-denial. When she sees the gift, she also, with a mother's insight, sees its prompting and its history; and, turning instantly from the gift, she throws her arms lovingly about her son, and says: "My dear, dear boy, how good this is of you!" How cold alongside of such thanking as this would be the warmest words of conventional thanks for the gift as a gift!

A man has given himself in unreserved devotedness to a political canvass in behalf of a candidate whom he loves and honors without limit or measure. At the close of the successful canvass, the candidate gives his heartiest thanks to all ordinary workers in his behalf. At last he turns to this friend,

and, instead of thanking him as he has thanked the others, he says with welling heart and trembling voice: "*You* I cannot thank. To proffer *you* thanks would seem to intimate that your loving service could be measured. But you have made this canvass your own; and I feel that you have been the real winner in it quite as truly as I have. You seem to me to be a part of my very self in all this. I am too grateful to thank you." And that is simply an exhibit of high character in thanking.

Whenever there is thinking in a man's thanking of his fellow-man or of God, the character of the thinking thanker will show itself in the unconventional expression of thanks, and in the direction of those thanks toward the giver as a giver, rather than toward his gifts as gifts. So it is that our character shows itself in our prayers to God, and in our acknowledgments of the loving service of any to whom we ought to be grateful.


XX.

FACING BACKWARD, OR FACING FORWARD.

By nature man seems intended to face in the direction of his walking. But, as a practical truth, few men walk through life with their faces persistently set forward. Some, as they walk, have their faces down at their feet, looking to their steps in carefulness; or watching for possible treasures on the earth they are treading; or not venturing to raise their eyes because of an oppressive sense of their own unworthiness. Others look back with longing for that which is behind them, or with regrets over that which they missed, and go forward with vain self-reproaches over former failures, or with useless wishes for a retention of the enjoyable things from which they are moving away. Others, again, as they walk, give sidelong glances at that

which is on their either hand, without gaining a clear full view, from either front or rear, of that which strikes their eyes. Yet others look only upward, as they move on in life, seeking to gain a sight of the invisible, and to be lifted thereby in spirit above the trials and the needs of their earthly course; and in this their eyes are too often turned away from the duties and privileges which await them in their path of progress.

There are those who turn their whole bodies toward the starting-point of their life's journey, instead of toward its destination, and walk backward, with their faces set on that which is now before their eyes when it ought to be behind their backs. Again, there are those who, with their faces set toward their destination, move onward with their eyes fixed on that which is in sight before them, and in expectant outlook for that which is yet to appear in the same direction. Looking downward, looking upward, looking backward, looking sideways, are common ways of looking as one moves



on in his life-course; and all these ways have their advantages as varying methods within their respective limits; but facing to the rear and walking backward is the poorest way of all of making progress in life. And the best way of all is walking forward and facing as one walks.

There are two ways of making progress in knowledge,—walking backward and walking forward,—and it is probably true that more men walk backward than walk forward in the path of knowledge. In the one case the man fixes his eyes on the knowledge already acquired by him, and walks backward facing his acquisitions of knowledge. He does not indeed claim, nor even suppose, that he knows all that is to be known; but he sees no signs of *unattained* knowledge in that on which his eyes rest as he moves backward with his face toward that which is already his. There is no active expectancy of further acquisitions of knowledge in his mind, because he sees no place for such acquisitions. Nor does he have any doubts

as to the fulness and accuracy of the knowledge which he has. Any addition to or correction of that knowledge is, in a sense, forced upon him; and it brings with it only a confirmation of his conviction that his stock of knowledge is a great and a growing one.

In the other case, however, the man with his face set toward yet unattained knowledge loses sight of that which he has already gained. As soon as he has made an acquisition, it is put behind him, and he presses forward toward that which is still in advance. The more he knows, the more he sees of his comparative ignorance. He is always expecting to gain, but he is never satisfied with what he does gain. Such a man makes larger and more constant additions to his store of knowledge than the other; even though he has no such supreme satisfaction with it.

There are two ways of journeying toward heaven,—walking thither with the face forward, and walking thither with the face back-

ward. In the one case the believer has hope as well as faith. He is sure that the best things are before him, and not behind him. In the other case, he can see only the good that has been. His faith is practically without hope. He whose outlook is the forward one, finds added cheer in every gleam of light, and in every new token of God's loving favor. These are in themselves incentives to him to press on with zeal and enthusiasm toward their source, and so toward the enjoyment of which they give him promise.

But he whose face is in the direction of the past, finds continually only fresh cause for thinking that the greatest good is thitherward. All the good he sees he is moving away from. Every step of his progress takes the only brightness he has known one step farther away from him. His very blessings as he journeys come in upon him from behind, and he has never a glimpse of them until they are already receding in the distance. And so it is that, while both believers are helped heavenward by the good gifts

which their Father sends to them, the one is led by these blessings, with his face glowing in their coming light; while the other is pushed backward by these blessings, with his face saddened by his regrets that he must move away from the only good which has ever gladdened his pilgrim eyes.

Every Christian believer is moving in one of these ways on his heavenward course; and it is for him to decide which way shall be his. He can walk toward the light, or he can turn his back upon it. He can insist on believing that he is moving away from the good old days; or he can be sure that the best days and the best things which God has for his children are ever and always yet to come. And so it is that in the passing years one believer looks sadly upon the years which he is leaving, while another looks forward in hope to the years which are coming. And this difference of attitude toward the years as they come and go, is the result of a radical difference of character in him who observes the years.

